

FREMONT

THE WEST'S GREATEST ADVENTURER

ALLAN NEVINS

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Fremont, the West's
greatest adventurer

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The West's Greatest Adventurer



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JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT
(From a daguerreotype of Civil War days.)

FRÉMONT

THE WEST'S GREATEST ADVENTURER

*Being a Biography
from certain hitherto unpublished sources*

OF

GENERAL JOHN C. FRÉMONT

TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE

Jessie Benton Frémont

*and some account of the period of expansion
which found a brilliant leader
in The Pathfinder*

By ALLAN NEVINS



IN TWO VOLUMES, VOLUME TWO

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK and LONDON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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FIRST EDITION

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21032

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F R É M O N T

CHAPTER XXII

THE QUARREL WITH KEARNY

IT is not difficult to imagine the sensations which filled Frémont's mind on the morning of January 14, 1847, as he prepared, with the Capitulation of Couenga in his pocket, to march into Los Angeles. A heavy rain began falling; in the downpour the California troops brought into camp a brass howitzer which they had captured from Kearny at San Pascual. Camp was broken, and the men, urging their jaded animals over slippery hills, entered the beautifully verdant plain surrounding the town. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the rain still pouring, they were marching down the muddy principal street. A more ragged, ill-provided, unprepossessing battalion it would have been difficult to imagine; they might have been taken, one of them remarked, for a tribe of Tartar nomads.¹ Their garments tattered, drenched, and plastered with mud; some of them without hats or shoes; their horses dispirited and exhausted—only their military order and arms made them seem soldiers. Yet Frémont had the proud consciousness that California was conquered, that he had played one of the most important rôles in the conquest, and that it was to him that the last hostile force

¹ Bryant, *What I Saw in California*, 384 ff.

had surrendered. He had the pleasant knowledge that Commodore Stockton would appoint him governor, and that he would shortly rule over the territory from which only a few months earlier Castro had ignominiously expelled him. It must have been an exultant moment. He little thought that one of the most humiliating and agonizing ordeals of his life lay just ahead.

This ordeal—the bitter quarrel between Kearny and Frémont, Kearny's triumph and the arrest of Frémont, and Frémont's court-martial—may be briefly dismissed. It attracted national attention; and because it made Frémont more than ever a national figure, it was partly a blessing to him in disguise. It was one of those episodes which are almost certain to occur in protracted wars waged in regions distant from the central government. The clash of authority seemed, as it always does, to bring out the most disagreeable qualities of both antagonists. In consequence, a historian of the period has said that after careful study he thinks that Kearny was "grasping, jealous, domineering and harsh," and that Frémont appears "a provokingly unprincipled and successful schemer."¹ This is an unnecessarily severe view of Frémont, if not of Kearny. It would be easy to take a similarly caustic view of the conduct of General Worth and General Scott in their controversy in this same War. Neither Kearny nor Frémont appears to advantage in the needless dispute and Kearny was unquestionably brutal; but neither man was so bad as

¹ Smith, *War with Mexico*, II, 454.

his opponent's adherents, then in California and later in Washington, thought him.

In its origin the dispute turned on the technical military question as to whether General Kearny or Commodore Stockton was, under their instructions from Washington, the commander-in-chief in California. It could not have arisen but for the vagueness and confusion of the orders which reached these two commanders from Washington. Each officer had much right to feel that the chief authority was his. General Kearny had been instructed by the War Department on June 3, 1846, that "should you conquer and take possession of New Mexico and upper California, or considerable places in either, you will establish temporary civil governments therein." He had also been instructed two weeks later that certain troops then being sent to California by sea, "and such as may be organized in California, will be under your command."¹ As for Stockton, he had been reminded on July 22, 1846, of his duty to take and hold California. "This," he was instructed, "will bring with it the necessity of a civil administration. Such a government should be established under your protection." He was to communicate his instructions to General Kearny when the latter arrived, "and inform him that they have the sanction of the President."² What wonder that each Commander

¹ Senate Executive Documents, Thirtieth Congress, First Session, No. 33. This will be referred to hereafter simply as *Frémont Court-Martial*, it being the proceedings of that trial.

² *Frémont Court-Martial*, 412.

thought that he had the exclusive right to erect and control the new civil government for California?

It was the misfortune of Frémont to be caught in the collision between these two officers; it was his further misfortune to choose the side which subsequent orders from Washington failed to sustain. No blame attaches to him for this. He might well have felt that the orders which Stockton held were superior to those in Kearny's hands; they were a month later in date. Moreover, Kearny's instructions were conditional. "Should you conquer and take possession of . . . upper California," he was told, "you will establish a civil government there." But both Stockton and Frémont took the view, with much justice, that the conquest of California had been substantially completed before Kearny's arrival, that they had already set up a civil government, and that Kearny had done nothing but get defeated at San Pascual and require rescuing.

Moreover, Frémont felt a natural and legitimate personal preference for Stockton as his superior. Both headstrong, quick, and fond of action, they were congenial in temperament; they had worked together with little friction for more than six months, and had a high personal regard for one another. Frémont's California Battalion had been organized under Stockton's direct authority, with the explicit understanding that it should act under the Commodore's orders so long as he remained on the coast and needed its services. Its officers derived their appointments from Stockton and it was

paid by his orders. It was, as Stockton himself wrote later, never in any form mustered into the Army, but was exclusively a naval organization. Moreover, Frémont had long felt that the Navy Department under Secretary Bancroft (now resigned) was more efficient, alert, and sympathetic toward him than the War Department. Then and later he believed, not without reason, that many West Point graduates and older army officers were jealous of his rapid rise. Finally, and very importantly, he kept in mind the fact that Stockton had solemnly promised to make him governor.

Altogether, Frémont's course must have seemed very clear to him. Kearny, with his customary Irish assertiveness, lost no time after the three officers had taken their quarters in Los Angeles in trying to establish himself as boss. He sent a curt note to Stockton, demanding that the Commodore cease all further proceedings relative to the organization of a civil government, and another curt missive to Frémont, ordering him to make no changes or appointments in the California Battalion without the express sanction of Kearny as his commanding officer. We can imagine Frémont and Stockton conferring in consternation. The peppery Commodore had no intention of taking orders from the man he had rescued from Mexican hands only a few weeks before. He immediately informed the General that a civil government was already in successful operation, that he would do nothing that Kearny demanded, and that he would send the General's note to President

Polk and ask for his recall. Kearny, on the next day, January 17, 1847, replied with asperity. He claimed the conquest of the country for the Army forces under his command, and declared that it might now for the first time be considered in American possession. "As I am prepared to carry out the President's instructions to me," he added, "which you oppose, I must, for the purpose of preventing a collision between us and possibly a civil war in consequence of it, remain silent for the present, leaving with you the great responsibility of doing that for which you have no authority . . ." ¹ Thus the Army and the Navy glowered at each other in Los Angeles.

It was in some ways a comic opera quarrel, but its consequences to Frémont were most serious. That young officer had to make his choice on the morning of January 17, when Kearny summoned him to the low adobe headquarters, and asked him if he had received the orders of the day before. Frémont with a touch of defiance stated that he had written a reply, which he had left with his clerk to copy. At this moment, Kit Carson entered with the document in question, which Frémont read through and, seizing a pen from Kearny's table, signed. He then seated himself, at Kearny's request, while the latter read the reply. It was a decisive though tactful refusal to obey Kearny's command. Frémont said that he believed Commodore Stockton to be the governor and commander in chief in California, that

¹ For these letters, see Bigelow, *Frémont*, 194 ff.

he had received a commission from Stockton, and that Stockton was still exercising the functions of civil and military governor. "I feel myself, therefore," he concluded, "with great deference to your professional and personal character, constrained to say that, until you and Commodore Stockton adjust between yourselves the question of rank, where I respectfully think the difficulty belongs, I shall have to report and receive orders, as heretofore, from the Commodore."

Kearny was a man of hot temper, and a martinet of iron will. Frémont had known something of him in St. Louis, where Kearny had been in command and where he had married a stepdaughter of General William Clark. He had heard the story of how this harsh-featured veteran of the War of 1812 once fell from his horse in front of his parading troops, and, pinned beneath the animal, had imperturbably continued his orders to the advancing men: "Fourth Company, obstacle—March!"¹ He knew how implacable Kearny could be when aroused. However, for the moment, Kearny was patient in his irritation. He told Frémont that he was a much older man and soldier, that he had a warm regard for Colonel Benton, who had done him many favors, and a real affection for Jessie, and that he would give the young explorer some honest advice. This advice was to take the letter back and destroy it. Frémont of course declined, saying that Stockton would support him; to which Kearny rejoined that Stockton could

¹ Fayette Robinson, *Organization of the Army of the United States*, II, 130 ff.

never support him in disobeying the orders of his superior officer, and that if Frémont persisted, he would ruin himself.¹ The two parted stiffly, and from that moment it was war to the knife.

On that same day, Frémont received from Stockton a commission, dated January 16, 1847, appointing him governor and commander in chief of California until the President should otherwise direct.²

For the next fortnight, Frémont was regarded almost everywhere in California as the civil governor under Stockton's appointment; for somewhat more than two months, or until late in March, he was recognized as governor by the people in and about Los Angeles, while Kearny's authority was established farther north. The regular army officers, of course, refused to recognize Frémont, though they were in much perplexity as to who was actually at the head of affairs. A young lieutenant named William Tecumseh Sherman, who had just come out by sea around Cape Horn, tells us that the mess-room query was very frequent, "Who the devil *is* the governor of California?"³ Making Los Angeles his capital, Frémont appointed his friend Captain Owens his "secretary of state," and began issuing gubernatorial orders in due form. On January 25, he directed Captain S. K. Wilson of the Light Artillery to raise a company of men for "the California service," enlisting them as soon as possible. He purchased an island

¹ *Frémont Court-Martial*, 38, 39.

² Bigelow, *Frémont*, 273.

³ W. T. Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 23.

near the mouth of San Francisco Bay, taking title for the United States and promising a payment of \$5,000. His treatment of the people of southern California was extremely conciliatory and kind, and he rapidly made them his firm friends.

General Kearny, meanwhile, after a few days in San Diego, departed with a couple of officers in the sloop *Cyane* for Monterey, which he reached on February 8, 1847. Here he met Commodore Shubrick, who was in command of the frigates *Independence* and *Lexington*, and who now supplanted Stockton as chief naval commander. Kearny was rowed over to the *Independence*, wearing an old dragoon coat and army cap, to which he had added a broad visor cut from a full dress hat to shade his face and eyes from the glaring sun.¹ He showed Shubrick his orders, and the Commodore promptly recognized Kearny "as head and commander of the troops in California."² Going ashore and establishing his headquarters at Larkin's house, Kearny was pleased to find a strong company of artillery ready waiting for him. In the ensuing weeks, other important bodies of troops arrived from the East. The famous battalion of Mormons, about five hundred strong, which had been recruited in Council Bluffs after that sect had been driven from Nauvoo, reached the territory and made camp at San Luis Rey. A regiment of New York volunteers under Colonel John D. Stevenson came out

¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 24.

² *Frémont Court-Martial*, 96 ff.

by sea, and, like the Mormons, were expected in large part to remain as settlers.¹ All these soldiers supported Kearny as governor and refused to have anything to do with Frémont. When Frémont received a curt and chilly letter from Commodore Shubrick, under date of February 13, showing that Shubrick and Kearny were working in perfect accord, he must have realized that he was left standing alone.

In fact, though he did not know it, all ground for claiming the authority of governor had now been cut from beneath the young explorer's feet by orders from Washington. These orders, written on November 5, 1846, by the Secretary of the Navy, informed Stockton that the President deemed it best to invest the military commander with the direction of land operations and with the civil government, and ordered him to relinquish to General Kearny the entire control over these matters.² This was decisive. It made Kearny governor and commander in chief. If the Government had only had wisdom enough to do it six weeks earlier, it would have prevented the whole dispute. The message reached San Francisco on February 12, 1847, and must have been in Monterey before the 15th, or within a month after the original quarrel of Stockton and Kearny. The General had won a swift triumph.

Unfortunately, Kearny made an unjust and hectoring use of his victory. It would have been the part of a

¹ Smith, *War with Mexico*, II, 219.

² *Frémont Court-Martial*, 55.



TWO CALIFORNIA COMMANDERS

(At the right, Commodore Robert F. Stockton as painted by Newton in 1840; at the left, Stephen W. Kearny, from a daguerreotype of about 1835 engraved for *Graham's Magazine*. The one Frémont's friend; the other his foe.)

gentlemanly officer to inform Frémont at once of the new orders, and to treat him with consideration in his sudden humiliating drop from governor to subordinate. Kearny instead concealed them from Frémont. Long afterward, he explained this by saying, "I am not in the habit of communicating to my juniors the instructions I receive from my seniors, unless required to do so in these instructions."¹ This is a very lame explanation for a base act. Frémont always spoke of the concealment with justified resentment, and believed that it was dictated by a wish to plunge him deeper in seeming disobedience to the Government. Nor was Kearny less domineering in other regards.

The painful events which followed, and which led up to Frémont's departure for the East as a virtual prisoner of General Kearny's, make an unhappy chronicle. Kearny and Shubrick, at the beginning of March, issued a proclamation in which the General formally assumed the governorship, but no copy of it was sent to Frémont. Instead, Kearny transmitted to him a curt order to bring to Monterey, as the territorial capital, all archives and public documents pertaining to the government, and to surrender them. Kearny added that he had directions from General Winfield Scott, which he enclosed, not to detain the explorer in California against his wishes a moment longer than the necessities of the service might require.² Once he had complied with

¹ *Frémont Court-Martial*, 102.

² *Congressional Globe*, Thirtieth Congress, 1st session, Appendix, 994.

Kearny's instructions regarding the papers, and had obeyed the General's further orders that he muster his men into the United States service, so that they might be discharged and paid, he could depart. Of course Frémont refused to obey this demand for the papers. He knew nothing of the government orders of November 5, and believed that Kearny was simply trying, by bluster and threats, to depose him from the governorship.¹ Kearny simultaneously placed Lieutenant-Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, with the Mormon battalion, at San Luis Rey, in command of the southern half of California. When Cooke sent a courier to Los Angeles to inquire of Frémont how many of the California Battalion had entered the United States service, he received little satisfaction:²

The answer was by a "governor," through his "secretary of state," that none had consented to enter the public service; but as rumors of insurrection were rife, it was not deemed safe to disband them.

If Kearny's object was to entrap Frémont into a defiance of duly constituted authority, he had now succeeded. And certainly the General's tactics were as arrogant and hostile as possible. In his proclamation, he included a direct slap at Frémont by saying that "there is no doubt that some excesses, some unauthorized

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 288.

² Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California*, 286, 287.

acts, were committed by persons in the service of the United States." He cast public contempt upon the certificates which Stockton and Frémont had given in payment for property and services, saying they were almost worthless. Once when a merchant showed him Frémont's certificate for a considerable sum, inquiring as to its value, Kearny looked at it, and asked a bystander for a quarter of a dollar. When the man gave him half a dollar, Kearny replied: "That's too much; a quarter-dollar is its value."¹ Rumors spread that Kearny considered Frémont a mutineer and that he was preparing a condign punishment for the young explorer.

All this unquestionably threw Frémont into intense anxiety; and at the same time, he became worried by the growing unrest of the Californians about Los Angeles. It is hard to determine just how great this unrest was. We can hardly believe that even the most febrile young bloods and irresponsible loafers of the region, only two months after being soundly thrashed, with overwhelming American forces on the scene, would think of a revolt. They would simply be putting their necks inside a halter. But Frémont was excited; he was full of resentment against Kearny, and he was all too ready to believe that Kearny's displacement of him would cause all kinds of trouble. He had plumed himself upon the tranquillity and good will of all the citizens of southern California under his sway. "I lived

¹ *Congressional Globe*, ut supra, 995.

in the midst of the people in their ancient capital," he later boasted, "administering the government, as a governor lives in the capital of any of our States." The security of life, limb, and property seemed as complete as in New England; travelers on lonely trails, dwellers on isolated ranches, were perfectly safe; and Frémont himself, sending his Battalion out to the mission of San Gabriel only nine miles away, lived almost without guards. Now, in his overwrought frame of mind, he thought that all this was changing.

No doubt he exaggerated the peril; no doubt, also, there were some grounds for concern. Little bands of armed Mexicans were galloping about the country, and news came in of men armed to the teeth patrolling the roads. Most of the Californians seemed uneasy, and rumors flew about of a bloody uprising at hand. Frémont was at no loss to lay the blame directly upon Kearny. It was—he thought—because the Mormon troops under Cooke had been marched from San Diego toward Los Angeles, and the Californians hated and feared the Mormons; because Kearny's proclamation had annulled some of the mild and wise provisions of the Capitulation of Couenga; and because of reports that after Frémont had been forcibly deposed, a much harsher officer would be installed in his place. Still more important was the money consideration involved in the reports that Kearny's policy was opposed to any payment for the cattle, horses, and goods taken, and the property destroyed, in the conquest. The antagonism

of many native Californians had suddenly been aroused, and Frémont thought it was actually greater than it was.

Under these circumstances, he determined upon a characteristically rash, theatrical, and arduous enterprise—a ride night and day to Monterey to “warn” Kearny. It was not necessary for him to go in person; and had there been danger of an outbreak, his duty would have been to stay vigilantly with his Battalion in Los Angeles. He knew this perfectly well. One reason for the ride, we may conjecture, was that he wished to find out in person what his real status was, and perhaps to try to conciliate Kearny. Another reason was unquestionably his worry over the possibility that Kearny would influence the Government against paying the heavy debts he had incurred.¹

¹ In the fifty days of his dubious governorship Frémont repeatedly borrowed large sums. He obtained a loan of \$2000 from Don Antonio José Cos on Feb. 4, 1847, and of \$1000 more on Feb. 20; he borrowed \$2500 from Eulogio de Celis on March 3; and on March 18 he obtained \$15,000 from F. Huttman for drafts on the government, allowing a premium of \$4,500—that is, giving Huttman drafts for \$19,500 in all. Secretary Buchanan refused to honor the drafts, and they were protested, this leading ultimately to Frémont’s arrest in London. These loans variously bore interest at two or three per cent. a month. Frémont also gave Celis a certificate or receipt for the delivery of 600 beef cattle for the army, pledging the United States to pay \$6,975 for them. These cattle never went to the California Battalion, but were instead delivered to Abel Stearns, to be held for breeding. Celis later declared that Frémont, “not having time to consume said cattle on account of having received a superior order to deliver up the command and disband the force, ordered said cattle to be delivered to Mr. Abel Stearns, as I understand, in the quality of a deposit, until the government should dispose of them.” Frémont himself explained that he put the cattle in private hands to secure himself if the government should fail to acknowledge the debt. This seems reasonable, but it does not offer a complete explanation of his certificate of delivery for the army. It is clear that Frémont was getting into deep water financially, and had reason to become apprehensive. For this matter of financial claims see Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 435, 462 ff.; Cardinal Goodwin, *Establishment of State Government in California*, 35–38.

At any rate, the effort was a feat which makes many another famous ride of history, like that of Burnaby to Khiva, seem modest by comparison. Accompanied only by Don Jesus Pico and the faithful black servant, Jacob Dodson, Frémont set off at daybreak on what was to be a round trip of eight hundred and forty miles in eight days. There were three horses apiece, or nine in all; the loose mounts, or six extra horses, as was customary on such expeditions, were driven ahead, and every twenty miles or so, as a fresh steed was wanted, one was lassoed and saddled. At a sweeping gallop, they covered one hundred and twenty miles the first day, March 22, 1847, sleeping at a ranch beyond Santa Barbara. The following day they traversed one hundred and thirty-five miles, reaching the old home of Don Jesús at San Luis Obispo, where they made a complete change of horses. They rode some seventy miles the third day, and slept in a canyon of the Salinas where, after midnight, they were awakened by prowling bears; at dawn they were off again, and in mid-afternoon, after traveling ninety miles, were at Kearny's headquarters in Monterey. The trip back again, after a day for a conference with the General, was made with equal rapidity. Frémont had covered a distance almost equal to that from New York to Chicago, over rough ground, in seventy-six actual riding hours, an exploit which merited the immense *réclame* which it later obtained.¹

¹ Cf. Dellenbaugh, *Frémont and '49*, 375 ff.

If Frémont had hoped to improve his relations with Kearny by the interview, that hope was quickly dashed. He was received, he later claimed, with every token of disrespect and discourtesy; and certainly a stormy scene ensued. The explorer entered alone, at ten o'clock in the morning, though Larkin accompanied him to the door; he found that Kearny had with him Colonel R. B. Mason, an able army officer, and that both men were stiff and hostile. Frémont asked if he could not be left in private with the General, and when Kearny refused to dismiss Mason, the young officer blazed up with the words: "Did you bring him to spy upon me?"¹ This ended all hope of courteous relations. From Larkin in Monterey Frémont had for the first time received definite information of the orders of November 5, though rumors of their nature must have reached his ears before. Larkin, a shrewd, frank man, had perhaps advised him overnight to yield to Kearny. At any rate, Frémont now offered his resignation, which Kearny refused. The General instead demanded whether Frémont would obey his orders of March 1, and when the Lieutenant-Colonel hesitated, bade him reflect well upon the answer, for it would be very important; if he wanted an hour for consideration, to take it; if a day, to take that. Frémont departed, and in about an hour returned and said that he would obey.²

The position of the deposed Governor was now hu-

¹ *Congressional Globe*, ut supra, 1000.

² *Frémont Court-Martial*, 104.

miliating, and the old-line officers of the regular army seem to have missed few opportunities to lacerate his feelings. His attitude was no doubt provocative. The hot-tempered accusation that Kearny was employing Mason as a spy was probably all too typical of Frémont in those days. Yet there can be no question that he was treated badly. He was sent back to Los Angeles, with orders to wind up the affairs of the California Battalion there and to surrender the public property. Colonel Mason, intensely prejudiced against Frémont, was sent after him, to have full charge over the southern district. Between these two men there promptly occurred a series of clashes. Colonel Mason, experienced, practical, of stern and even harsh character, had an instinctive dislike for the impulsive, impractical explorer. Their collisions culminated in an angry scene in which Mason exclaimed, "None of your insolence, or I will put you in irons!" and in a challenge by Frémont to a duel.¹ General Kearny had to take decisive measures to prevent this encounter from occurring. It must be said that the challenge did Frémont anything but credit, and that Mason showed much more cool sense and prudence than he in the matter. The explorer would have been wise at this juncture to avoid any display of animosity, repress his explosive tendencies, do his work well, and conciliate his superiors. But the evidence seems clear that Mason hectorated him and put needless indignities upon him in the presence of other officers.

¹ *Frémont Court-Martial*, 142 ff.

Kearny had already made up his mind to take Frémont back East with him, and there place him under arrest for mutiny and insubordination. For this reason, he brusquely refused Frémont's request, made in Los Angeles on May 10, 1847, that he be allowed to take sixty men and one hundred and twenty horses which he had gotten in readiness, and join his regiment under General Winfield Scott in Mexico. Later, the young officer counted this refusal a gross injustice, for it contravened orders given by Scott himself.¹ An equally peremptory "no" was given to Frémont's suggestion that he be allowed to return direct to the United States with his own original exploring party, at his own expense, instead of with Kearny's command. He was, in fact, now virtually a prisoner. The volunteers of the California Battalion, refusing to be mustered into service with poor pay, were discharged in a bitter frame of mind with no pay at all.² Left with a fragment of the loyal company which had entered California with him, only nineteen men in all, Frémont was compelled to trail eastward at the chariot wheels of the General. He was "exhibited" in a humiliating way, as he later put it, in Monterey at the close of May.

In fact, the gossip of army circles and the settlers' camp fires at the time was that Kearny intended the severest penalties for Frémont. Young W. T. Sherman heard some officers declare that the explorer would

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 292.

² Smith, *War with Mexico*, II, 218.

be shot; others, that he would be carried back home in irons.¹ It may be mentioned that Sherman rode out to his tent to see him near Monterey, and took tea "without being much impressed by him." Kearny plainly told Frémont that many of the claims he had incurred in the name of the Government would not be allowed, and would have to be met from his own pocket.² Thus the inglorious episode drew to its end.³ In June, the explorer joined Kearny in camp near the Sacramento, and about the middle of that month they set out on the long transcontinental journey by way of Fort Hall. Frémont was compelled by the General to leave behind him at San Francisco all his geological and botanical specimens; he had also to abandon his much-used scientific instruments; and he was not allowed to bring back with him Kern, the artist of the expedition, with his sketches and outline maps.

Throughout the trip home the two parties, such was their antagonism, did not travel together and had none but a formal intercourse, Kearny instructing Frémont to keep his men at a specified distance in the rear of his own Mormon escort. Once or twice, he roughly told Frémont to change his place of encampment. On the day they reached Fort Leavenworth, late in August, Kearny sent for the young Lieutenant-Colonel to come to him at the office of the commandant. There he was seated and a lieutenant read to him an order, directing

¹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 27.

² Captain Aram's story, *N. Y. Herald*, Oct. 1, 1856.

³ Cf. John T. Hughes, *Doniphan's Expedition*, Ch. 15.

him to give up his party, arrange his accounts, consider himself under arrest, and proceed to Washington to report.¹

The long ordeal was ended, and Frémont, free at last from the daily humiliation of Kearny's direct control, turned his face toward St. Louis with relief. Considering himself the chief figure in the conquest of California, the victim in recent months of adverse circumstances and of military jealousy, he felt sure of vindication. As he and his friends reached Kansas Landing, the wide muddy river stretching away in the August haze below them, they saw a boat putting in at the log wharf. Pushing through the crowd of roustabouts, loafers, and half-bewildered emigrants to the gangplank, Frémont heard a choking cry—and Jessie ran into his arms.² She had come up from St. Louis to meet him. The joy of the reunion, after more than two years, may be imagined; and it was but the beginning of a reception which quickly became something of an ovation. Kearny, grim and taciturn, had preceded Frémont down the river, and extended and exaggerated reports of their dispute had preceded both. But public sympathy naturally inclined toward the young officer who had made so dashing a record in the West, and with whose family St. Louis had so many and such close ties. The river towns cheered him. St. Louis received him with acclamations; the leading citizens has-

¹ *Frémont Court-Martial*, 113, 114.

² St. Louis correspondence, *N. Y. Herald*, Sept. 6, 1847.

tened to call upon him, and tendered him an invitation to a great public dinner, which he, of course, felt it necessary to decline. He did, however, make a brief speech to the crowd which surged about him on his arrival, reviewing and defending his course in California.

To his friends, who did not want to hear the adverse evidence, the case was already clear. Frémont, like Columbus, they said, had returned from the discovery and conquest of a New World beyond the Rockies a prisoner and in disgrace.¹

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 214.

CHAPTER XXIII

A FAMOUS COURT-MARTIAL

THE Benton family had been up in arms from the moment it had first heard of the clash between Frémont and Kearny. On June 7, 1847, the precise, methodical President Polk, having finished his morning's work at his desk and risen from his lunch, told the secretaries at one o'clock to open the doors of his public office. Among the first callers, richly dressed, was Jessie Frémont, and with her the short, sturdy figure of Kit Carson, weather-beaten, swarthy from the southwestern sun, and awkward in his soot-black new broadcloth. The famous scout had made the overland trip from the Pacific Coast in a little more than three months, and brought the Los Angeles news of February 25 with him. He was enjoying the hospitality of the Benton home in Washington, where his modesty and gentleness had already won him the warmest regard. Polk greeted the pair cordially.

Kit Carson, Jessie told the President, had been waiting for several days for an opportunity to talk with him and tender his services as dispatch bearer to California. Carson then came forward and delivered Polk a long letter from Frémont, which had been addressed originally to Benton, and which Benton had sent on

from St. Louis. It related in part to the quarrel over the governorship. "Mrs. Frémont seemed anxious," wrote the tactful Polk in his diary, "to elicit from me some expressoin of approbation for her husband's conduct, but I evaded [making any]. In truth, I consider that Colonel Frémont was greatly in the wrong when he refused to obey the orders issued to him by General Kearny. I think General Kearny was right also in his controversy with Commodore Stockton. It was unnecessary, however, that I should say so to Colonel Frémont's wife, and I evaded giving her an answer." Polk hoped the quarrel would blow over. Just a week later, Jessie called again with Kit Carson. This time she expressed a wish that her husband might be kept in California. The President told her that Carson would be given orders to Kearny leaving it to Frémont's option to stay on the Pacific Coast, or to return east and join his regiment, the Mounted Rifles, then in Mexico.

All this was a prelude to a much more serious attempt to enlist Polk against General Kearny. On August 17, 1847, as the hour for a Cabinet meeting approached, Senator Benton was ushered in at the White House. He was just back from the West, and Polk gladly took time to talk with him.¹

He remarked that he had some time ago addressed a letter to the adjutant-general [relates Polk in his diary] demanding that Colonel Frémont should be recalled and a court of inquiry organized

¹ *Diary of James K. Polk* (M. M. Quaife, ed.), III, 120 ff.

in his case, as due to the Colonel's honor and military character. I replied that I had read his communication, but that it had not been deemed necessary to take any action upon it. I told him that there had been some difficulty between the officers in California, which I much regretted, and that I had hoped it might not be necessary to institute any trial by court-martial. I also made a general remark to the effect that I had not deemed it necessary to do so. General Benton to this remarked in substance, I am glad to hear from you, sir, as President of the United States, that there has been nothing in Colonel Frémont's conduct which requires a court-martial in his case. I instantly said to him that he must not understand me as expressing any opinion in reference to the difficulty which had arisen between Colonel Frémont, General Kearny, and Commodore Stockton in California; but what I meant to say was that I hoped that the difficulty upon the arrival of the instructions of the 5th of November last had been settled, and that it might not be necessary to institute proceedings by a court-martial in reference to the matter, and that I desired to avoid doing so if it could be done. To this General Benton said there was of course no commitment on my part. . . .

Senator Benton thereupon added that he should introduce a resolution in the Senate calling for a full investi-

gation of California affairs; and when Polk told him with some stiffness that the Administration had nothing to fear from the most searching inquiry, he explained that he did not mean to bother the Administration, but merely wished a broader investigation for Frémont's sake than the technical and limited procedure of a court-martial would allow. "He was evidently much excited," wrote Polk, "but suppressed his feelings and talked in a calm tone."

Benton's heat in the matter sprang from something more than his native irascibility and intense family loyalty; he was prone to imagine conspiracies, and he believed that Kearny's army friends had banded together to destroy Frémont by malicious newspaper stories.¹ Unquestionably, one agent of Kearny's, Lieutenant W. H. Emory, whom the General had sent to Washington by way of Panama with dispatches at about the same time that Frémont had sent Kit Carson overland, had spread some partisan and ill-natured reports. Emory seems never to have been highly accurate in his statements, and he shared the usual disdain of regular army officers for Frémont.² He had no sooner reached Panama on his way east than he wrote a long letter attacking Stockton and Frémont. This letter appeared in the *New York Courier and Enquirer* of April 23, 1847. He seems to have furnished the material for prejudiced and misleading articles in the *New Orleans Picayune* of

¹ *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, 1st session, Appendix, 1019.

² Cf. W. H. Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth . . . to San Diego* (1848).

April 22 and 27, 1847, the *Louisville Journal* of May 1, 1847, and the St. Louis *Republican* of May 4, 1847. Benton believed that Lieutenant-Colonel Philip St. George Cooke of the Mormon Battalion was guilty of complicity in this defamatory campaign, which he ascribed to jealousy; and there is no doubt that Cooke seldom lost an opportunity to speak slightly of the explorer.¹ The effect upon Jessie of the sudden outburst of press attacks was later bitterly described by Benton to the Senate:

There was a wife—young and sensitive—to whom the light of heaven became hateful, and darkness terrible, and society intolerable—who fled two thousand miles, to meet in the wilderness the “mutineer in irons,” as some gave it out—a young wife, tranquil in the day, when people looked upon her—convulsed and frantic in the night when left to her own agonies—the heart bursting, the brain burning, the body shivering: and I, her father, often called, not to witness, but to calm, this terrible agitation—and these publications the cause of all.

Benton swore vengeance, and Benton's demands made the court-martial inevitable. When aroused, he was a bitter, implacable foe, and he was a great national power, whom even Polk had reason to conciliate. By late summer the stage was all set. Kit Carson had posted west, and braving the difficult journey to Santa

¹ Cf. Philip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California*, 286 ff.

Fé, was far in the Southwest again. Frémont and Jessie, after their joyous reunion at Kansas Landing, had lingered in St. Louis at the Brants' only a few days, and then had hurried on by way of Blue Lick, Kentucky—where Mrs. Benton was staying on one of the Senator's farms to recruit her health—to Washington; every stage in their journey chronicled in the newspapers.¹ Kearny had preceded them. Alarmed by the Senator's anger and the growing storm, he stayed with his family in St. Louis only four days, and was in New York, getting ready for the trial, on September 10, 1847.² Army circles and political circles felt that a *cause célèbre* was about to begin. It divided attention with even the final battles of Scott's army before Mexico City—Molino del Rey on September 8 and Chapultepec on September 13. Its possible effect on Benton's loyalty to Polk and on party politics was eagerly discussed. Already it was evident that public sympathy, with its natural leaning toward a young, dashing, picturesque figure and its sympathy for the under dog, inclined to the explorer.

The explorer was soon busy going over his case with Benton and with his brother-in-law, William Carey Jones, and preparing his defense. On first reaching Washington he had been called south by the last illness of his mother in Aiken, South Carolina; she died before he arrived, and he could only accompany her

¹ *St. Louis Weekly Revue*, Sept. 20, 1847.

² *N. Y. Herald*, Sept. 11, 1847.

body to Charleston, where she was buried. But despite the haste in which he had left the capital, he took time first to write the Adjutant-General, requesting that he be given a trial as soon as the witnesses then in the United States could be assembled in Washington. He would have preferred, he said, to wait for Stockton and for leading citizens of California who were ready to testify in his behalf; but he was so eager for a speedy vindication that he would ask only for a month to bring certain witnesses from Missouri. There was a larger reason than his mere personal justification, he added, for holding the court-martial.¹ The accusations against him covered the whole field of his operations in California, both civil and military, from his first arrival in 1846. The testimony at his trial would therefore be a history of the conquest of California and an explanation of the policy he had pursued there. Being a military subordinate, he could make no report, but the trial would serve as a substitute, throwing light on the conduct of all the American officers, and indicating the proper policy to be pursued towards the native Californians, the American settlers, and the Indians.

Polk's diary shows that he was deeply concerned by the course of events; the proposed court-martial was the principal business considered at the Cabinet meeting of September 18, 1847. It shows also that the choleric Benton was injuring his son-in-law by excess of zeal.²

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 217 ff.

² Cf. *St. Louis Republican*, Aug. 27; *St. Louis Weekly Reveillé*, Sept. 13, 1847.

Various newspapers had said this flatly. Benton called at the White House for a long chat with Polk one evening late in October, a fortnight before the court-martial, and he could talk of little but Frémont's virtues and Kearny's malignity. Sitting in front of the fire, he declared with vehement senatorial gestures that the deepest concern of his life was to see justice done the young explorer. If the inquiry were not full and complete, he threatened, he would have four other officers court-martialed—Kearny, and the impudent young men of Kearny's entourage, W. H. Emory, Captain H. S. Turner, and St. George Cooks. His excitement was painfully evident, and Polk, who listened attentively, was careful to say as little as possible.¹ The President, in fact, was becoming a little sour toward the Benton family.

A day or two after this call, Polk was treated with great rudeness by Benton's son Randolph, who strode in to ask for a lieutenancy in the War, grew impatient and impudent when Polk said that commissions went by merit and not by favor, and swore audibly as he flung himself out of the door. The Senator was meanwhile bombarding the Secretary of War with requests and demands regarding the trial, some of which were inadmissible; and as the month closed, it was necessary to give most of two Cabinet meetings to their consideration.

"Benton," sighed the harassed President, "is a man

¹ Polk, *Diary*, III, 176, 177.

of violent passions." Well realizing that he was likely to make the Senator an enemy of his administration, Polk was resolved that the explorer should be tried as other officers were tried, without favors or privileges:¹

I know of no reason why this case should produce more interest or excitement than the trial of any other officer charged with a military offence, and yet it is manifest that Senator Benton is resolved to make it so. I think he is pursuing a mistaken policy so far as Col. Frémont is concerned, but that is an affair of which he must judge. I will do my duty in the case, without fear or affection.

Thus the trial came on. It was superb Indian summer weather. Pennsylvania Avenue was lively with carriages and fashionably dressed promenaders. The hotels were awakening from their summer sleep to welcome the first politicians arriving in preparation for Congress; Douglas of Illinois, the "little giant," was at Coleman's; Clingman of North Carolina at Brown's; Bishop Polk of Louisiana at Gadsby's. A corps of Indians, which happened to be in town, divided attention with the dozens of army officers who had arrived to be witnesses or spectators at the court-martial.² Headlines on the front pages of the Washington and New York dailies dealt with what was considered the

¹ Polk, *Diary*, III, 202-205.

² *N. Y. Herald*, Nov. 4, 5, 1847.

most dramatic army trial since the court-martial of General Wilkinson thirty years before. At twelve o'clock noon on November 2, 1847, the panel of officers, carried to the arsenal in Washington by a special omnibus, was called to order by Brevet Brigadier-General G. M. Brooke, of the Fifth Infantry.

Each side had its body of retainers and witnesses, who glowered at one another, while the principals surprised the reporters by sitting as cool as cucumbers. Especial notice was attracted by Frémont's "desert rangers and mountain scalers," including his veteran scout, Alexander Godey, his faithful aide, Dick Owens, the trapper, Thomas Williams, and Risdon Moore, the Illinoisan of his party who had disagreed with him regarding his early California operations, but who after a night in jail had become a whole-hearted adherent.¹ Kearny and his associates, among whom was the Captain H. S. Turner whom Benton had named to Polk as a special object of his wrath, blazed with gold lace. The General looked solemn, stern, and inflexible, while Frémont, sitting at a side table with the Senator, "appeared as if writing at his camp in the mountains."² Benton, self-possessed and calm, watched every step in the proceedings like a hawk.

At the outset, the explorer announced that he would make no use of technical or legal points of defense, would raise no artificial objections, and would do all

¹ *Washington National Intelligencer*, Nov. 3-7, 1847.

² *N. Y. Herald*, Nov. 6, 1847.

that he could to expedite the trial. The three charges were of mutiny from January 17, 1847, to May 9; disobedience of the lawful command of a superior officer; and conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline. Frémont declared that he considered the whole affair to be a comedy of three errors: "*first*, in the faulty order sent out from this place; *next*, in the unjustifiable pretensions of Gen. Kearny; *thirdly*, in the conduct of the government in sustaining these pretensions, and the last of these errors I consider the greatest of the three." Kearny would have preferred to rest his case upon the worst charge alone—mutiny.¹ His Irish blood was now up, and he at once angered Frémont and Benton by making an accusation which touched the personal honor of the former as nothing else had done.

This was the accusation that Frémont, when summoned to acknowledge the authority of Kearny instead of Stockton, attempted to drive a bargain regarding the civil governorship of California. This effort to sell himself to the highest bidder, said Kearny, took place in the General's headquarters at Los Angeles on January 17. "He asked me if I would appoint him governor. I told him I expected shortly to leave California for Missouri; that I had, previous to leaving Santa Fé, asked for permission to do so, and was in hopes of receiving it; that as soon as the country was quieted I should, most probably, organize a civil government in California; and that I, at that time, knew of no objec-

¹ Benton, *Thirty Years' View*, II, 716.

tions to my appointing him as the governor. He then stated that he would see Commodore Stockton, and that, unless he appointed him governor at once, he would not obey his orders, and left me." This charge Frémont indignantly denied. It was essentially a charge that he had a corrupt motive, and he repudiated it angrily. Never in his life, he said, had he either begged or bargained for any office, though three Presidents, Jackson, Tyler, and Polk, had given him appointments.¹

Unquestionably, we may accept Frémont's denial as valid; he was frequently hotheaded, but he was never base. Kearny, as Frémont and Benton had no difficulty in showing, was an unreliable witness, whose memory in other particulars was highly untrustworthy. At the same time, it is almost certain that some mention of the governorship had been made in the conversation between Kearny and Frémont. Frémont actually received from Stockton a commission as governor bearing date of January 17, the day in question. A fortnight later, in a private letter to Benton, he wrote that "both [Kearny and Stockton] offered me the commission and post of governor; Commodore Stockton, to redeem his pledge to that effect, immediately, and General Kearny offering to give the commission in four or six weeks." This was unquestionably true. Kit Carson tells us that Kearny had spoken repeatedly, in his journey from Santa Fé to California, of his intention of making

¹ *Frémont Court-Martial*, 380, 392, 393.

Frémont governor.¹ It is altogether likely that Frémont, with his usual frankness, told Kearny that he wished to be civil governor and that Stockton had promised him the place; it is altogether likely that Kearny, in reply, said that if the young man would be patient, would accept his authority, and would wait three or four weeks, he would himself make the appointment. Kearny's error lay in giving this conversation a sinister interpretation.

The court-martial dragged slowly forward, in the formal, punctilious fashion of army trials. Public interest for a time remained surprisingly intense. James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald*, which had a truly national circulation, published two columns regarding the case on November 7, 1847; one column the following day; gave it almost the entire first page on November 9; and throughout the remainder of the month allotted it from one-eighth to two and a half columns daily. Everywhere in the West and South, the press took up the trial at great length. It advertised Frémont to the American public as he had never before been advertised, and it soon became clear that it presented him in a favorable light. Nobody could read the evidence and blame him for his insubordination in very severe terms. The oldest officers of the Army, as members of the court later admitted, would have been puzzled to decide the question of the relative rank of the Commodore and the General. He was the victim

¹ *Congressional Globe*, Thirtieth Congress, 1st session, Appendix, 978.

of a dispute between them, a dispute not of his own making. For another thing, insubordination was not rated a grave offense by our frontier society. Finally, of course, the trial wrote indelibly into the public mind the fact that he had played an early, daring, and important part in the events which gave California to the nation.

Nominally on the defensive, Frémont and his counsel were actually able in considerable part to take the offensive against Kearny. They accused him, quite unjustly, of entering California to steal the laurels and the material benefits which Stockton and Frémont had won by their forced battles, dangerous skirmishes, and constant hardships. Their defense implied other accusations. They made it clear that they believed the regular army to be unjustly jealous of the exploits of the young outsider. They gave prominence to the fact that the brass cannon which Kearny had lost in the defeat of San Pasquale had been recaptured by Frémont, and hinted that Kearny felt humiliated and jealous on this score. They declared that Kearny's deliberate intent had been to ruin Frémont; that with this purpose he had refused to give Frémont notice of his impending arrest; that he had forced upon the Lieutenant-Colonel the necessity of choosing between a surprise trial, or allowing ruinous charges, supported by a defamatory press campaign, to hang over his head. There was enough truth in these statements to give them effectiveness. Finally, they said, Kearny had taken pains to

detain Frémont's friend Gillespie in California, with the evident hope of crippling his side of the case; but fortunately Gillespie had extricated himself and reached Washington.

In fine, it was an exceedingly bitter court-martial. When the day came—January 24, 1848—for Frémont to sum up his defense, the room was crowded with army officers, congressmen, and fashionable ladies. Before this distinguished audience, Frémont flung the accusations of perjury and false testimony in Kearny's face. His arguments, said the reporters, made a strong impression.¹ They would have been better arguments if they had been more moderate in tone, and if he had avoided unnecessary imputations upon the acts of the brave and effective soldier who confronted him; but the young officer closed his plea well:

My acts in California have all been with high motives and a desire for the public service. My scientific labors did something to open California to the knowledge of my countrymen; its geography had been a sealed book. My military operations were conquests without bloodshed; my civil administration was for the public good. I offer California, during my administration, for comparison with the most tranquil portion of the United States; I offer it in contrast to the condition of New Mexico at the same time. I prevented civil war against

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Jan. 27, 1848.

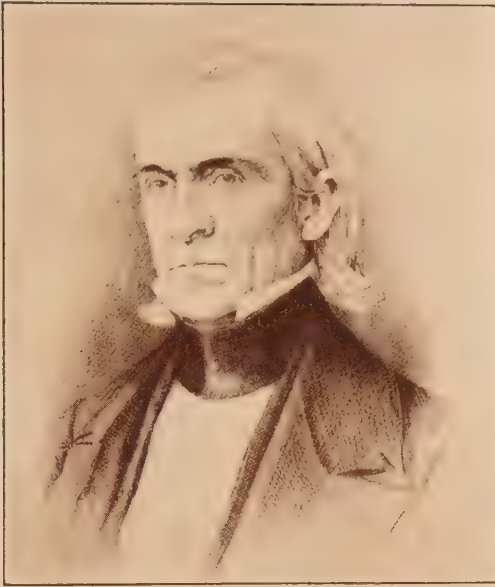
Gov. Stockton, by refusing to join Gen. Kearny against him; I arrested civil war against myself, by consenting to be deposed. . . .

I have been brought as a prisoner and a criminal from that country. I could return to it, after this trial is over, without rank or guards, and without molestation from the people, except to be impertuned for the money which the government owes them.

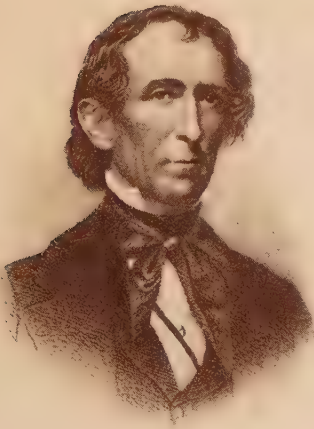
I am now ready to receive the sentence of the court.

This was more dignified than the conduct of Senator Benton in the closing days of the trial. He suddenly conceived the idea that Kearny at one juncture had looked "insultingly and fiendishly" at Frémont, and that it was therefore his duty, when Kearny took the stand, to glare at him in an angry, intimidatory way. The result was an explosion by Kearny, a direct clash between the General and the Senator, and an angry scene in which the latter, boasting that he had outstared Kearny "till his eyes fell—till they fell upon the floor!" was rebuked by the presiding officer.

After three days of deliberation, the court on January 31, 1848, found Frémont guilty on all three charges, and sentenced him to be dismissed from the service. Six of the twelve members of the court recommended him to the clemency of President Polk, mentioning the peculiar circumstances of the case, and the distinguished



JAMES K. POLK



JOHN TYLER



ZACHARY TAYLOR

THREE PRESIDENTS KNOWN TO FRÉMONT

(He reported to Tyler upon his second expedition; Polk approved the sentence of the court-martial upon him; Taylor tendered him an appointment which he refused.)

professional services rendered by the defendant. The verdict thereupon went to the Cabinet, which devoted the greater part of two meetings to its consideration. All the members agreed that Frémont had been guilty of disobedience of orders, but most of them doubted whether he had committed mutiny, and they were unanimous that so valuable an officer ought not to be dismissed. In the end, two members of the Cabinet, Buchanan and Attorney-General Nathan Clifford, advised that Polk disapprove the sentence as being too severe, while three others, Secretary of War Marcy, Secretary of the Navy Mason, and Postmaster-General Cave Johnson, urged him to approve it and then remit the penalty.¹ Polk decided to follow the latter course, and made formal announcement that, believing Frémont to be innocent of mutiny but guilty on the other two charges, he approved the sentence of the court-martial, but canceled the punishment. "Lieutenant-Colonel Frémont," he ordered, "will accordingly be released from arrest, will resume his sword, and report for duty."

The President might have smiled sardonically as he published his determination. It was upon the insistence of Benton that Kearny's original charge of mutiny against Frémont, which Polk found unwarranted, had been broadened into a court-martial on the other two charges as well, which he pronounced warranted. Benton's temper had led him into a serious tactical blunder.

Although the President's decision was softened by

¹ Polk, *Diary*, III, 335-340.

a reference to "the previous meritorious and valuable services of Lieutenant-Colonel Frémont," it was too much for the high-spirited explorer to endure. He needed no advice from the thoroughly angry Benton to shape his course. Instantly he presented his resignation, declaring that he was innocent and that he could not, by accepting Polk's clemency, admit the justice of the verdict. A month later, on March 15, 1848, Polk accepted the resignation. Frémont was thus, at the age of thirty-four, with a brilliant career behind him, released to civil life. An unfortunate and totally unnecessary episode had been closed.

Technically, the verdict of the court-martial was just; from a broader point of view, it was excessively severe, and President Polk would have done well to accept the counsel of Buchanan and Clifford, and refuse it his endorsement. The real fault attached to the Administration itself for issuing such conflicting orders that Stockton and Kearny naturally disagreed as to their authority. Kearny was morally, if not technically, censurable for concealing from Frémont the directions from Washington which decisively ended this conflict. His attitude had been bullying and harsh, and even so severe a critic of Frémont as Royce admits that the younger man appears in much the better light. However rash Frémont had been at first and however quarrelsome later, a reprimand would have been an adequate punishment. When blame should have been apportioned among all the chief actors, in the drama, it was

unfair to concentrate it upon a brilliant and active officer whose chief offense was that he had not been able to decide which of two quarreling superiors was in the wrong.

That the public took this view is evident from the fact that the verdict did Frémont not a whit of harm. The press gave it scanty space, for everyone was tired of the affair; one journal remarked that the trial had taken longer than Scott's siege of Vera Cruz. The general opinion in Washington before the verdict had been that the explorer ought to be cleared.¹ When it was handed down, many declared that it showed the usual jealousy of West Pointers for an outsider. This was the view of Bennett's *Herald*, which remarked that "during the progress of the assizes we saw, from time to time, evidences of hostility on the part of members of the court against Lieutenant-Colonel Frémont, who held a higher commission, and was a greater, though a younger man, than a majority of his triers; and what we then suspected, has this afternoon been presented to us as actual truth."² But even the Washington newspapers, so jaded had the public at last grown, evinced little interest. All the talk of the day was of the rivalry of Harry Clay and Zachary Taylor for the Whig nomination, the sudden death of old John Quincy Adams, the Wilmot Proviso, and the details of the treaty with Mexico. Frémont's condemnation thus passed almost

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Jan. 31, 1848.

² *N. Y. Herald*, Feb. 21, 1848.

unnoticed, after weeks during which his defense and the story of his California exploits had been blazoned the nation over.

He actually gained in reputation by the trial. It was no misfortune to be taken from the Army, where his rashness and dislike of restraint would have kept him chafing, but in another sense he was a heavy loser, for his resignation broke off abruptly his career as an explorer of the West in the service of the War Department. The whole outlook before him seemed changed. He took the termination of his military ambitions bitterly to heart, and Jessie's sorrow was even keener. But the resentment of neither approached that of the irascible Benton. Polk wrote later:¹

There is every indication now that he [Benton] will join the Whigs in the support of General Taylor, at all events until he can get offices for his three sons-in-law. If I had failed to do my duty in Col. Frémont's case, and given an office which he sought for his Whig son-in-law [Jones], he would never have quarreled with me. His course toward me and my administration for more than a year past has been selfish and wholly unprincipled.

Benton indeed lost few opportunities to show his enmity for Polk. He introduced a bill to reform the procedure of courts-martial; he opposed the Administration on the treaty with Mexico; he ceased to call at

¹ *Diary*, IV, 330.

the White House, and for more than a twelvemonth had no intercourse whatever with the President; and he talked of publishing a letter of Polk's which would injure the Administration's prestige.¹ When in August, 1848, Polk nominated Kearny to be a brevet major-general, Benton declared that he would filibuster till the end of the session to defeat the appointment. He harangued the Senate for thirteen days, in a terrific and genuinely effective philippic against Kearny combined with laudation of Frémont; but in the end he failed, for the nomination was confirmed.

Kearny, it may be mentioned, died this same year in St. Louis. On his deathbed, he sent word by his physician to Jessie, who was in the city, that he would be grateful for a visit from her, but she refused the proffered reconciliation. Her second baby had just died from an affection of the heart which she always believed was caused by the anxieties she underwent during the trial; and she said that between her and Kearny there was a little grave that she could not forget.² Seventy years later, when the United States entered the World War, two National Guard camps were established on the Pacific Coast; one, in southern California, Camp Kearny, and the other, in northern California, Camp Frémont.

¹ E. I. McCormac, *James K. Polk*, 476 ff.

² *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

CHAPTER XXIV

STARVATION AND CANNIBALISM

PASSENGERS on the lake steamboat *Saratoga*, bound from Buffalo westward in the early fall of 1848, saw on its shelter deck an interesting family group: Frémont, in civilian clothes, with close-cropped beard, long mustache, and heavy curling dark hair, slightly grizzled in places; his still girlish wife, carrying a baby in her arms; the little girl of six, Lilly; and a servant. They kept to themselves and invited no approaches. But to one or two fellow travelers who won their confidence they spoke freely. They were on their way to California, with the intention of making it their future home. They frankly admitted that they were poor; they had nothing but Frémont's savings from his small army salary, and they faced the possibility that, if Congress refused to pay the debts he had contracted in his California operations, he would be held responsible for them. Empty-handed, he would have to endure duns and threats. However, they hoped quickly to gain a footing in that rich land. Frémont had placed in the hands of Larkin, the consul, before his departure to undergo his court-martial, a small sum—\$3,000—for the purchase of a ranch; and friends in the East had furnished him credit to send around Cape

Horn the agricultural implements and milling machinery he would need there. They had health and courage. It was plain that Frémont was depressed and pained by the verdict of the court-martial, which he felt as a deep injustice, but Jessie assiduously comforted him. "And it was very pleasant," later wrote a passenger, "to see how he was cheered on and encouraged by the vast prospect of doing good which was opened to them in that new territory. Neither had any other thought or expectation than to obtain an honorable and respected position by their own industry and economy."¹

They were not going out, however, as mere emigrants. Jessie was accompanying Frémont only as far west as Westport on the Missouri, when she would turn back and take a ship to California by the Panama route. Frémont would meanwhile assume command of a new exploring expedition to cross the Rockies by a southern pass. Nothing shows better the indomitable courage of the man than the fact that, a few months after he had been court-martialed, he had organized his own fourth expedition.

It was to prove the least fruitful of all his exploring trips, though it was destined to exhibit his resourcefulness, daring, and iron nerve as nothing had hitherto done. Its object was of real merit. Frémont had always wished to cross the continent on a central line intersecting the head of the Rio Grande, and he now

¹ Letter of T. C. Peters, *Buffalo Republic*, reprinted in *N. Y. Tribune*, July 8, 1856.

intended to make the trip. But this was not all; there was increasing talk of a railway to the Pacific; some wealthy citizens of St. Louis were interested in the project; and he planned to ascertain the availability of this route. Since the chief question was whether the snow would be an insuperable obstacle, he had determined to cross the ranges in midwinter. Just how the funds for the expedition were obtained is not clear. Very probably the men planning a Pacific railway subscribed a considerable sum; Senator Benton may have contributed some money; and it would seem that some of Frémont's followers, notably Edward M. Kern, the recent commander at Sutter's Fort, and his two brothers, furnished their services free. Kern and several of Frémont's other witnesses in Washington had eagerly urged the undertaking, and preparations for it had been in progress since May.¹

Thus did Frémont cling to his career as an explorer. The renown he had won in that calling was too great to permit him to give it up. While the court-martial was still a theme of general discussion, he had received from the citizens of Charleston a gold-mounted sword and engraved gold scabbard, both of beautiful workmanship, as "a memorial of their high appreciation of the gallantry and science he has displayed in his services in Oregon and California."² The Senate bill to pay the California claims which he had incurred during

¹ *St. Louis Weekly Reveillé*, July 3, 1848.

² *Charleston Mercury*, Sept. 21, 1847; Bigelow, *Frémont*, 222.

his military service on the Coast, \$700,000 in all, gave a number of senators, before its final passage, an opportunity to eulogize his work. Benton of course was foremost in this, but Senator Clarke of Rhode Island paid him the highest compliments, and John A. Dix of New York declared that he had "exhibited a combination of energy, promptitude, sagacity, and prudence, which indicated the highest capacity for civil and military command," and that his decisive movements had unquestionably "kept California out of the hands of British subjects." The magazines of the day united in praising him.

Nearly all the reviews had by now published articles upon his explorations, and some of them were glowing in tone. The anonymous writer for the *Southern Literary Messenger* remarked that his reports on the West must always be the basis of scientific information upon the regions he had traversed, "and the name of Frémont is immortalized among the great travellers and explorers, and will doubtless survive as long as those of the Sierra Nevada, or the Sacramento."¹ The *Eclectic Review* gave him many pages.² The *Democratic Review* thought that he had been insufficiently rewarded:³

The personal merits of Capt. Frémont, in these expeditions, have been great, and evince high talent for command and for enterprise. With an average of 25 men, and no officer to aid him, he has made

¹ Vol. 15 (1849), 528, 529.

² June, 1846.

³ Vol. 17 (July, 1845).

10,000 miles of march among tribes of savages, without ever being exposed to surprise or defeat, providing for the subsistence of men and horses, and preserving order, subordination, and cheerful obedience throughout his command. Without the aid of scientific assistants, he has so enriched his report with science as to seem to have been the work of professional savants. . . . The honorary reward of brevet captain has been bestowed upon him: Lewis and Clark received something more substantial—double pay, 1,600 acres of land each, promotion to generals, appointment of government commission to treat with Indians, and copyright in their Journal. Certainly, as first explorers, they were entitled to great merit; but they lack the science which Capt. Frémont carried into his expeditions.

Even abroad he was well-known; a little later, Baron Humboldt, on behalf of the Prussian Government, transmitted him a gold medal for progress in the sciences, while the Royal Geographical Society awarded him the Founder's Medal for distinguished services to geography.¹ It was unfortunate that he did not write a full scientific report of the third expedition which culminated in the California fighting. Instead, he contented himself with a careful map of Oregon and California, of which the Senate ordered 20,000 copies, and

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 327 ff.

a short and hasty *Geographical Memoir* accompanying it. This *Memoir*, which was the first publication to give currency to the phrase, "the Golden Gate," might have rivaled the reports of his earlier expeditions but for the court-martial, and the inability of Jessie to help him; she served for a time as amanuensis, and then her health broke down. Writing for Frémont one evening, she suddenly said, "Do not move the lamp, it makes it too dark," and went into a prolonged fainting fit, from which she emerged a temporary invalid.¹ Thereafter, Frémont spoke of his task as "the cursed memoir," and dismissed it as summarily as his conscience would permit him. He offered to furnish Congress a much fuller record of his trip, but although a committee under Senator Breese of Illinois reported in favor of this, the work was never authorized, and a distinct gap was thus left in the literature of the West.

Nevertheless, the scientific fruits of the third expedition were of distinct importance. The map, for which Preuss did the actual drawing from Frémont's and other surveys, was the most accurate yet made for the Pacific coast. More than a thousand botanical specimens had been preserved, and Professor John Torrey prepared a treatise upon them which was shortly published.² Many geological specimens had been collected, the sketches of scenery and animals were valuable, and there were brought east a large number of bird skins with

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

² *Plantæ Frémontiana*, Smithsonian Contributions, 1850.

the plumage intact. Frémont was plunged into a controversy with Captain Wilkes in June, 1848, regarding the accuracy of his topographical work and the consequent figures for the California coast line, and he emerged from it with enhanced scientific credit. He was universally and deservedly regarded as the best American authority upon the great new lands just acquired by the Mexican War and the Oregon treaty, and his writings were more than ever in demand. When he set out on his fourth expedition, he felt that he was continuing an invaluable national work, and that with new discoveries he might wipe out old humiliations.

Once more, then, the frontier; once more the free open prairies stretching before the explorer. Years later, in writing the second volume of his *Memoirs*, Frémont jotted down a set of rough notes upon the adventure.

A winter expedition—about snow obstacles and home for family—preparations at St. Louis—Campbell and Filley—journey up the river—death of the child—Mrs. Frémont at Maj. Cummins—camp on the frontier—Mrs. Frémont's visits to the camp—Scott and the quails.

Capt. Cathcart—personnel of the party (33 men)—Godey—the Kerns—King—Brackenridge—Creutzfeldt (when was he with me?)—The two

Indian boys Gregorio and Juan—Proue—the three Canadians.

Route up the Southern Kansas—the Arkansas bare of timber and exposed to snowstorms—for 400 miles abundant timber, grain, and excellent grass—Valley of the Kansas the best approach to the mountains—the valley soil of superior quality, well timbered, abundant grasses, the route direct—would afford good settlement for 400 miles.

The big timber, 30 miles below Bent's Fort—Fitzpatrick and the Indians, 600 lodges, talks and feasts—Indians report snow deeper than for many years—Nov. 17, mountains show themselves for first time, covered with snow, the country around also—not discouraged.

Thirty-three men, with horses and pack animals—a large expedition for a penniless leader—but numbers were needed, for the Indian tribes before him, the Ute, Apache, Navajo, and others, were hostile or uneasy, and might have to be fought off. The Campbell and Filley mentioned here were Robert Campbell and O. D. Filley, who, with Thornton Grimsley, all three substantial St. Louis business men, furnished financial and other assistance; Filley, a manufacturer, gave Frémont a large part of his camp equipment. The "death of the child" refers to the sad death of the Frémonts' sec-

ond child, Benton Frémont. This little boy had always been delicate and it was known by physicians who had attended him in Washington that his span of life was likely to be a very short one.¹ The young mother—Jessie was only twenty-four when the baby died—had no knowledge of this. The death occurred while the Frémonts were moving up the Missouri River to the starting point of the fourth expedition.

The night after Frémont and his party set out for the West, Jessie and her colored servant, Aunt Kitty, spent the night at the Indian Agency at Westport Landing. This agency—a queer, irregular string of log houses—was in charge of Major Cummins. Toward dawn Mrs. Frémont and her servant were disturbed by the piteous cries of a mother wolf hunting the cubs which Major Cummins had just killed, and they had hardly settled down again before their slumbers were broken by Frémont himself. He had ridden back ten miles from camp in his usual impetuous way to have a final hour with his wife, and Kitty had to get up and make a cup of tea. “And so,” wrote Mrs. Frémont afterward, “with our early tea for a stirrup cup, ‘he gave his bridle rein a shake,’ and we went our ways, one into the mid-winter snows of untracked mountains, the other to the long sea voyage through the tropics.”²

By the end of November, 1848, after visiting Bent’s

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.* Robert Campbell was a traveler, trapper, and pioneer of the Far West as well as a business man. O. D. Filley was the manufacturer of a Dutch oven then widely used in the West for baking bread.

² *Jessie Benton Frémont, A Year of American Travel, 20.*

Fort and making a detour to the "Big Timbers" to visit his old friend Fitzpatrick, who was stationed there as an Indian agent, Frémont had reached Pueblo. The trappers and Indians at the fort had told him that the extraordinary depth of the snow and other signs gave evidence of a severe winter coming; at Pueblo these warnings were renewed by men who declared that the cold upon the high peaks was unprecedented, and that the mountains to the west were impossible to cross.¹ But Frémont was determined to push on; a bitter winter season was just such a test of the practicability of a railway as he desired. His plan was to push west from the headwaters of the Rio Grande along the line of the 37th parallel, for he believed that he would find a good pass over the Sierras between the points marked by Walker Pass and Mono Lake. A large part of this region had not then been visited even by trappers, and no one knew that the Colorado River Canyon cut like a gash through it. Here, between the upper Rio Grande and the western rim of the Utah plateaus, lies some of the most formidable country in the United States—formidable even in summer, to men with the maps and equipment of the present day.² Midwinter was approaching, and Frémont was heading straight for it.

As a guide for the expedition, Kit Carson not being available, Frémont, at Pueblo, engaged the noted trap-

¹ M. McGehee, *Century Magazine*, March, 1891.

² Dellenbaugh, *Frémont and '49*, 391.

per and hunter, "Old Bill" Williams, a man more typical of the frontiersmen of the time and region than the honest, prudent Carson. He was as full of ludicrous eccentricities as any of Cooper's quaint characters, and yet as expert a scout as Leatherstocking himself. A tall, stooped man, of hatchet face, nutcracker jaws, small restless eyes, and querulous voice, he was still sturdy despite his advanced age. Though he had begun life as a Methodist preacher in Missouri, his speech was now the rough, full-flavored lingo of the illiterate mountaineer—"varmint," "plumb," "nigh onto," "haint gotter," and so on; but he always said something to the point. His gait was a queer, staggering wobble, which carried him first to one side and then the other of a straight trail, yet he was an indefatigable walker, and could cover enormous distances. When he lifted his gun the onlooker had to check a smile at the "double wobble" with which it came into position, but he could unerringly hit a coin at a hundred yards. On his piebald Indian pony, he rode with his chest bent over the pommel, his stirrups ridiculously short, his trousers hitched up on his bare calves, and his arms flopping up and down over his arched knees. He wore a buckskin hunting shirt, black with dirt and grease, and for headpiece a blanket cap, so roughly tailored that the two corners projected like a wolf's ears. In all, he was a remarkable character.

Yet Old Bill Williams, despite his growing age, his oddities of speech and bearing, and the personal reck-

lessness which made him, whenever he sold a load of furs, embark upon a wild spree, drinking, gambling, and tossing whole bolts of costly calico to the vociferous squaws in the streets of Taos, seemed an excellent choice for Frémont's purpose. Nobody, except perhaps Jim Bridger, knew the Rocky Mountains so well. Twenty-six years earlier, he had been the guide of Major Sibley of Missouri when the latter surveyed the Independence route to Santa Fé.¹ He was accustomed to go into the wilderness alone and live for months, trapping, shooting, and exploring. Like Bridger, Milton Sublette, Étienne Provot, and others, he took an Indian wife—indeed, several Ute squaws followed one another in rapid succession—and ingratiated himself with various tribes. With the range in front of Frémont he was supposed to be perfectly familiar. "His knowledge of that part of the country," says the scout Antoine Leroux, "was perfect."² He shared the misgivings of the other experienced frontiersmen of the regions regarding a winter passage of the Rockies; but as Frémont insisted, he concluded to go, believing that the party could fight its way, though not without great suffering, through the snow-choked passes.³

Frémont felt safe in going on because his party included some of the most experienced and fearless members of his former companies. Preuss was with him as topographer, and Alexander Godey, both of whom had

¹ Cf. *Fort Sutter Papers*, MS. No. 126.

² *Fort Sutter Papers*, MS. No. 130.

³ McGehee, *ut supra*.

been with him in his midwinter passage of the Sierras. Kern had brought his two brothers, one of them a physician. One of the new recruits was Captain Cathcart, of the British Army, an able and fearless man. Another was Micajah McGehee, a capable frontiersman, who kept a diary, which, published by his brother in 1891, is an invaluable source of information.

They plunged into the Rockies, which had for several days loomed up a vast snowy panorama before them, on November 26, 1848. One of the men looked up at the icy slopes and storm-wreathed cliffs as they rode through the valleys below, and remarked, "Friend, I don't want my bones to bleach upon those mountains." He little dreamed that to some of his comrades death would appear a welcome relief before they were through. Several others, with a premonition of disaster, climbed to a little point that evening to take a last look at the prairies behind. "The sight was beautiful," wrote McGehee; "the snow-covered plain far beneath us, stretching eastward as far as the eye could reach, while on the opposite side frowned the almost perpendicular wall of high mountains."

The first few days of travel were sufficient to show that they had embarked upon a grim undertaking. They moved forward on foot, the mules they had bought in Pueblo carrying 130 bushels of shelled corn. As they pushed into Huerfano Valley, just below the high Sangre de Cristo Range, the difficulties grew heavier. The cold was intense, the ground was rocky and treach-

erous, and the storms of sleet so terrific that at times it was almost impossible to make the mules face them. The men suffered from frozen hands, ears, and toes. Still greater were the sufferings of the animals, for with no food but dry grain and no water but melted snow, they were driven to their last ounce of strength. One by one, the mules began to drop down by the trail to die. Every step upward made the cold more intense, until the mercury sank entirely into the bulb of the thermometer, and failed to register the temperature. Their breath congealed upon the men's faces until their beards and eyelashes stood out stiff and white, and they could hardly speak. In this fashion they managed to cross the Sangre de Cristo Mountains by Robidoux Pass, and coming down into the San Luis Valley, 7,000 feet above the sea level, pushed across it till they reached the rushing waters of the Rio Grande, and found them frozen over almost solidly.

It was now December 11, 1848. Before them rose the massive San Juan Range, its peaks lifting 14,000 feet into the sky. The critical moment for the expedition had arrived, the moment when they must determine by which pass they should scale this mountain wall; and it found Frémont and Old Bill Williams in disagreement. Frémont declared for one route, and Williams for another, the Wagon Wheel Gap, which has an altitude of 8,390 feet, with the real pass beyond much higher.¹ Perhaps disaster would have overtaken them

¹ Dellenbaugh, *Frémont and '49*, 395.

no matter which choice they made. But after all was over, and the dead were counted, Frémont laid the blame upon Williams's shoulders. The error of the journey, he wrote, was in hiring the old scout, who proved never to have known, or else to have forgotten, the district into which they were plunging.¹ This statement was at once and vigorously contested by several men, and most notably by Edward Kern, who declared that the error in choosing the route was Frémont's own.² Upon this contradictory testimony, different men have since founded varying opinions. But a decisive confirmation of Frémont's statement is supplied by no less a person than Alexander Godey, whose letter has long been lost in old newspaper files:³

And now as to the statement made by the Messrs. Kerns, in relation to which you wish my opinion. I will say that every man who was with Col. Frémont on that unfortunate trip to the Carnero Pass knows it to be untrue. I had the honor of being in command under Col. Frémont on that expedition, and I say now, as I have ever averred, that if there were blame to be attached to any source, on Bill Williams, our guide, and myself should its entire weight rest.

Col. Frémont was, from the time we first came in sight of the Carnero Pass, on the 8th of December,

¹ Letter of Dec. 11, 1849; Bigelow, *Frémont*, 391.

² Cf. *Fort Sutter Papers*, MS. No. 125.

³ For this most interesting document, see *N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 30, 1856.

to the 17th, a period of nine days, strongly averse to taking it in our course, preferring to turn off and go through the Cochetopy, a pass some thirty miles to the left; and scarcely a night passed without a consultation took place between the Colonel, myself, Williams, and others; but Williams, who had, as he said, frequently travelled it, evinced so much confidence, and was so strenuous in his efforts to carry his point, that I was completely in his favor, and always told the Colonel that I myself was perfectly willing to trust Williams and follow him; and in this way we travelled on, Frémont unconvinced, yet without any reason to urge, until the 12th instant, when Williams and myself, being ahead, were overtaken by Frémont, who rode up and halted us, and the entire party stopped in the middle of the day. The Colonel then again expressed his fears of trouble ahead, and then it was that Williams told him, that "if he doubted his capacity to carry the party through, say so, and he could get another pilot;" he asserted in the most positive terms that "he knew every inch of the country better than the Colonel knew his own garden." Having every confidence myself in Williams, I advised the Colonel to let him go on, that I was perfectly willing to follow him, and that everything would result favorably.

This was the last consultation on the subject. Frémont acceded to our united arguments, and,

the die cast, we pushed on, with what result is well known. For the subsequent misfortunes that befell us, Frémont is not reprehensible. He trusted to his guides, in whose representations he was bound to place confidence, and that they were deceived was no fault of his.

Later Kit Carson and Frémont both strongly suspected that Williams deliberately led the party astray, hoping that they would lose their baggage in the deep snows before emerging on the other side, and that he could come back the next spring to claim it.¹

Striking away from the Rio Grande, the party found themselves in an almost impassable country. The ascending track lay through deep mountain gorges, amid towering precipices and crags, and along slopes so steep that again and again, as they toiled along, a mule would lose its footing and go rolling to the bottom. They had to cross rough-bottomed and boggy streams which rushed precipitately down deep ravines, and in which the pack animals would stick tight, sometimes half a dozen in a group. Thereupon Frémont and his men would turn back, wade in up to their waists in the floating ice, and shove, haul, and belabor the animals until they scrambled, dripping, up the banks. The obstacles multiplied themselves as they went on. Every day the snow drifts became more appalling in their depth, and the cold more intense. Every night more

¹ Frémont, *MS. Memoirs*. For an explanation of the nature of these Memoirs, see the Bibliography appended to this work.

mules succumbed and were found stark and stiff at dawn. "It seemed like fighting fate to attempt to proceed," wrote McGehee, "but we were bent on our course, and continued to advance."

Once, the men in advance returned with the hopeful news that there was a clearer prospect ahead and that they thought they saw grass; but when the main party came up, they found that it was only the tops of trees and bushes peering from the all-extending sea of snow. Repeatedly the expedition would break camp in the morning and set off bravely, only to find the tempest of snow too much to face. The bitter wind, sweeping across the peaks with incredible velocity, cut like a knife. Sometimes they were mocked at nightfall by a furnace sunset, which seemed to give out cold rather than heat, but for the most part the sky was a leaden pall. On one of the marches into the teeth of a storm, Old Bill Williams was so nearly overcome that he dropped down upon his mule in a drowsy stupor, and was almost senseless when his companions dragged him back to camp.

But it was the tortures which the fierce weather and the rough trail inflicted upon the pack animals which were most heartrending. The corn was now exhausted and the animals were crazed with hunger. They would roam about ravenously all night, and being too weak to break a new path, would usually wander back along the trail of the previous day, pawing in the snow for vegetation. They began devouring the rawhide lariats with

which they were tied; they followed this by eating the blankets which were thrown over them at night, and the rigging of the packsaddles, and finally even chewed off one another's manes and tails. They were mere specters of skin and bones; the weaker mules would collapse every fifty yards, and the men, with frozen and lacerated fingers, would unfasten their packs and lift them up.

Finally they reached the naked, treeless crest of the Great Divide. The cold here was more intense than ever, while the storms on these high rocky ridges were almost incessant. Twice Frémont, with unconquerable resolution, forced his men to attempt a passage. On the first day, they encountered a blizzard or *pouderie*, the dry snow being driven so thick by the gale that it was impossible to see more than a few feet in advance, while the roar was deafening and at times it was difficult to catch breath. After a brief fight, the men were forced back into camp. Dead mules were lying about the fires, and it continued all night to snow steadily. The next day, the storm had ceased; they made mauls and, beating a road through the snow, crossed the ridge in defiance of the gale, and made camp just below the timber line. "The trail," Frémont wrote, "showed as if a defeated army had passed by; pack saddles and packs, scattered articles of clothing, and dead mules strewn along." Then the blizzard returned and paralyzed the party. They were now 12,000 feet above the sea, and in an almost hopeless position. The long rolling ranges and valleys to the westward were buried in

snow. It was impossible to go on, and almost equally impossible to turn back. "We were overtaken," Frémont said, "by sudden and irretrievable ruin."¹

Under the circumstances, the only hope of escape lay in an immediate retreat. Frémont determined to recross the crest, and very mistakenly decided to try to take the baggage with him down to the Rio Grande. Along this stream he hoped to find game. On the 22d of December, they commenced their movement, and being now reduced to man power, required more than a week to move their camp and equipage over the top of the pass, a distance of two miles, to the head springs of a stream leading to the river. At this altitude the slightest exertion was laborious, and sometimes caused long attacks of nosebleed. The snow was from four to thirty feet in depth; and when they built their camp fires, cavernous pits were formed, completely hiding the different messes from each other. Deep in these holes the men slept, spreading their blankets upon the snow. In the daytime, some of them, half blinded by the pine smoke and the frozen glare, staggered about uncertainly. They had begun to suffer greatly from hunger, and were living in the main upon the carcasses of the frozen mules, which they supplemented by butchering the few feverish animals which remained.

Christmas Day was spent in an atmosphere of deep depression. The men were worn out and utterly discouraged; worse than that, they were grumbling at

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 368.

Frémont for having obstinately thrust them into all this suffering and danger. Three men of the old exploring party, Godey, King, and Taplin, continued loyal and cheerful, but even Kern had become morose and resentful. Reduced to an emergency reserve of macaroni, sugar, and bacon, they did not have provisions to last two weeks. Frémont occupied the early hours of the day in dispatching an express party to the nearest settlements to bring relief. Calling for volunteers, and choosing King, Brackenridge, Creutzfeldt, and the guide, Bill Williams, he equipped them with rations and instructed them to hurry with all speed to the nearest settlements in New Mexico, and to bring back provisions and mules to an agreed point upon the Rio Grande. Then, after seeing the four men disappear among the snowy pines, Frémont turned back to the circle cowering about his snow-pit camp fire. He thought of the previous Christmas in Washington, and of the merry faces and abundant luxuries of Senator Benton's home. From the Senator's library in the Brant house in St. Louis he had brought some volumes of Blackstone, to be the foundation for his possible entrance upon the practice of law in California; and, his mind "filled with gloom and anxious thoughts," he now brought these out to read and pass the hours.

Descending along the little stream, over ground so rugged that they averaged scarcely a mile a day, Frémont's party finally reached the Rio Grande again. While they were thus engaged, their last regular pro-



DISASTER IN THE SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS. 1848-49
(From Frémont's, "Memoirs," Chicago, 1887)

visions had been divided, and they began boiling their rawhide ropes and *parfleches* to make a gluey soup. The cold seemed to redouble in the final bleak seven miles, and one of the men, Proue, becoming exhausted, lay down beside the trail and froze to death. The others passed and repassed his body, not daring to stop long enough to bury him. At one point, Cathcart, McGehee, and two others were imprisoned in a cave for two days by a terrific storm, with no subsistence except some rawhide shoestrings and old wolf-gnawed bones. When at last the expedition made camp on the river, they found as a fresh blow that there was no game, the deer and elk having all been driven off by the deep snow.

Frémont had given the party which he sent under King to seek relief sixteen days as ample time to make the round trip, and for a while he simply waited on the Rio Grande. But when the period elapsed, with the ebbing hopes of his men giving way to despair, he grew too uneasy to stay longer. Either King and his men had lost their way, he feared, or they had been cut off by hostile Ute or Apache Indians. There was just one course to follow—to set out for relief himself. Taking with him Preuss, Godey, and two other trusted men, and enough provisions for two or three days, he started down the river. He left orders that the men were to finish bringing all the baggage into camp, and push on with it after him till they were met by the help he would send back. He also made a statement which seems to have increased the mutinous resentment in the breasts

of some of his followers: that if they wished to see him they would have to hurry, for he was going on to California.

To tell in detail the horrors which attended the closing days of the ill-fated expedition, now split into three groups, would be unnecessary and repellant. Frémont made rapidly down the ice of the Rio Grande. He hoped to meet the returning party of Bill Williams; or failing that, to reach the Red River settlement one hundred and sixty miles away, and twenty-five miles north of Taos. On the sixth day, led by a friendly Ute whom they had found, they discovered a little smoke in a grove of timber near the river bank, and went to investigate it. Here they found the relief party which, twenty-two days earlier, they had sent out from the main camp. Three tottering scarecrows were left, Williams, Brackenridge, and Creutzfeldt, the most miserable objects Frémont had ever seen; and they told him that King had starved to death a few days before. As a matter of fact, they had partly eaten his body. Kit Carson later made the significant remark that: "In starving times no man who knew him ever walked in front of Bill Williams."¹ Placing the three on some horses which he had obtained from the Utes, Frémont hastened on to the Red River settlement, reaching it on the tenth evening after leaving the main camp. He at once took steps to hurry back a relief party under

¹ Frémont, *MS. Memoirs*. The Red River here mentioned is, of course, a small branch of the Rio Grande, and not the well-known river of that name.

Godey, with pack animals and provisions which he obtained from Rio Hondo and Taos, to the half-starved men left far up on the Rio Grande.

The word half-starved is a euphemism; for, by Frémont's own statement, the party was left with provisions for only two or three meals, with some five pounds of sugar additional for each man.¹ Its position was desperate, and to stand still was simply to wait for death. Two days after Frémont had left, when they were down to their last crumb, they held a consultation and decided to start down the river at once, hunting as they went along. Each man had a handful of sugar and they divided some bits of candles and rawhide. Trembling from weakness, their feet frozen and bleeding, they marched in gloomy silence. The river was a white streak of snow-blanketed ice; the sombre pines on each side were covered with long thick plumes of frost; there was not a sound of life—not the shriek of a jay, not the howl of a wolf. They had not gone far on the first day when the California Indian Manuel, whose feet were turning black, stopped, begged his mates to kill him, and then started back to the camp. A little farther on, another man, exhausted and half frozen, threw away his gun and blanket, staggered on a few hundred yards, fell into the snow, and died. That night a third, Carver, raved so violently that his companions became afraid of him, and in the morning, half-crazed, wandered off into the woods and was never seen again. Thus the survivors

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 370.

went on, the strongest forging ahead, the weakest straggling far behind, and death strode with them. Some of the men were fortunate enough to knock over two grouse, which they ate even to the entrails, and to find part of a dead wolf along the river, which they also devoured; some of them filled their stomachs with dried buds from the bushes, and scooped up water bugs where the river ice had melted slightly. Frémont has feelingly described the fate of some of the men, and the arrival of relief:

Ferguson and Beadle had remained behind. In the evening, Rohrer came up and remained with Kern's mess. Mr. Haler learned afterwards from that mess that Rohrer and Andrews wandered off the next day and died. They say they saw their bodies. In the morning Haler's party continued on. After a few hours, Hubbard gave out. They built him a fire, gathered him some wood, and left him without, as Haler says, turning their heads to look at him as they went off. About two miles further Scott . . . gave out. They did the same for him as for Hubbard, and continued on. In the afternoon the Indian boys went ahead, and before nightfall met Godey with the relief. Haler heard and knew the guns which he fired for him at night, and starting early in the morning, soon met him. I hear that they all cried together like children. Haler turned back with Godey, and went with him

to where they had left Scott. He was still alive, and was saved. Hubbard was dead—still warm.

When the first far-off halloo told that relief had come, ten in all of the thirty-three hardy frontiersmen who had set out from Pueblo into the mountains had lost their lives, and the remainder were mere wrecks of humanity. They were so emaciated that they looked like walking skeletons; their hair and beards were long and tangled; their faces were waxen under a mask of smoke and grime. Some of them had to be lifted upon the mules which Godey brought. In this condition, they were all taken down to Taos, and the tragic venture was ended.

While unquestionably a great part of the blame for the disastrous failure rests upon Bill Williams, who chose the wrong pass, and upon King and Williams jointly for their strange failure to find the right path down the Rio Grande toward Taos, Frémont himself cannot be acquitted of a large responsibility. He insisted upon attempting the crossing of the range after he had been warned in the most solemn terms at Bent's Fort and at Pueblo that it would be highly dangerous and probably impossible, and after Williams had entered an emphatic protest. It was therefore incumbent upon him, once the passage was under way, to use every precaution to insure the safety of his men. His cardinal error was committed when he turned back deliberately instead of speedily. He should have taken what food

and pack animals remained, abandoned the baggage, and made all speed to the nearest settlement, keeping his party a unit. By trying to extricate the baggage, he lost eleven men. A severe critic would say that these lives are upon his head. To be sure, as Godey explained later, he had provisions at the moment for eighteen or twenty days, and he felt almost sure that King and Williams would return with help within that time; but he should have taken into consideration the very real risk that they would lose their way or be slain by savages.

Edward Kern later attacked Frémont for not using the frozen mules, after the departure of King on Christmas Day, for food. But Godey is no doubt right in answering that this was impossible, inasmuch as the weather was too severe to permit the men to get out the carcasses from drifts twenty feet deep.¹ As for the failure of King and Williams to keep on the straight path to the settlements, this now seems inexplicable. By Godey's testimony, before they started, they and Frémont had fixed and determined every day's journey, and the various camping places, both going and coming; they were experienced, capable frontiersmen; and Williams supposedly knew the whole region. Yet they did not get fifty miles from their starting place.

It would have been more in keeping with Frémont's usual gallantry of conduct had he returned up the Rio Grande with the relief party from Taos which, under

¹ Godey's letter, *N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 30, 1856.

Godey, did the actual work of rescue. His excuse was possibly that he was too exhausted; one leg was badly frozen, and reports to the eastern press from a Taos correspondent declared that he was "very severely frosted and scarcely able to get about."¹ Members of his party reported him almost snow-blind. But if he was at all able to travel, he should not have rested while one of his men remained in danger in the wilderness. He went to Kit Carson's hospitable home, where on January 27, 1849, we find him writing Jessie, and telling her that: "This morning a cup of chocolate was brought to me, while yet in bed. To an overworn, overworked, much fatigued, and starving traveller, these little luxuries of the world offer an interest which in your comfortable home it is not possible for you to conceive." He spoke of Kit Carson's care, "constantly occupied and constantly uneasy in endeavoring to make me comfortable."² Unquestionably, his failure to go back accentuated the bitterness with which the three Kern brothers and others of his men always spoke of his leadership of the expedition.

Frémont was never a man for useless repining; he wrote Jessie that he had an "almost invincible repugnance" for the task of describing his sufferings, and his whole attention was now centered upon proceeding overland to California. From Major Edward F. Beale, who had been in the California fighting, had been Car-

¹ *Liberty, Mo., Weekly Tribune*, March 30, 1849.

² For his long and vivid letter, see Bigelow, *Frémont*, 365 ff.

son's associate in an heroic crawl through the Mexican lines after the battle of San Pascual, and was now commanding the army forces in northern New Mexico, he received the kindest assistance, including the loan of some horses and the sale of provisions from the commissary's department. Though he had saved most of the instruments, all his camp equipment, almost all his clothing, and all his money were lost. Other men besides Carson and Beale came to his aid, for Taos was full of old friends—Dick Owens, Lucien Maxwell, and Francis Aubrey among them; and Aubrey lent him a thousand dollars to purchase animals to continue his journey.

Before he left Taos, Frémont told the men of his reunited party that he would be glad to mount and equip all who would accompany him to the Pacific. Most of them, including Godey, volunteered to go. The three Kern brothers, who were impatient to return to the States, Bill Williams, and a few others declined. It may be mentioned that the following spring, Williams and Dr. Kern returned to the scene of the disaster to recover the baggage, money, and Edward Kern's historical papers, and that they were attacked and killed, either by Indians or by some treacherous Mexicans who accompanied them.¹ To increase the ill feeling among those who were left behind, they received the impression that Frémont had made an unfair division of the stores bought from the commissary, though later Godey stren-

¹ So McGehee; but cf. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 118.

uously denied that this was the fact.¹ It was not until they reached Albuquerque, according to Godey, that Frémont was able to obtain military stores in any quantity. The new party which the explorer outfitted here and in Santa Fé consisted of twenty-five men and sixty horses, and he planned to use them in going south of the Sierras by way of the Gila River.

The early incidents of this final stage of his trip, Frémont has jotted down in his usual crisp English in the rough notes previously referred to:²

With 25 men all told and outfit renewed I resume journey, following down the Del Norte and intending to reach the Rio Grande by a route south of Gila River. The snows this season too heavy to insist on a direct route through the mountains. Engage a New Mexican for guide—spring weather in the valley—fruit trees in bloom—hospitality. Leave the river—open country—snowed on again—no wood and weather cold. Retreat into the Membres Mountains. Pleasant country, well wooded, resembling the oak region of the Sierra Nevada—color of soil—grass and water abundant. Travel along foot of mountains. Apaches around the camp—watch and watch—McGehee fired on—halt and have parley with chief—make friends. The Indians go to Membres River with us. Breakfast and presents. Indians direct us to watering

¹ *Fort Sutter Papers*, MS. No. 126.

² *Frémont MSS.*

place in the open country—appoint to meet us there—their war parties out in Chihuahua and Sonora. I push forward and avoid them.

The Apache visitor—Santa Cruz. The Mexican and the bunch of grass. Follow down the Santa Cruz River—Tucson. Spring on the Santa Cruz—peach orchard—the ruined missions. River lost in the sand. The grass field and water at foot of the hills. Reach the Gila River. The Pimah village (see Johnson's report)—Indian faces painted with black lead.

Follow the river around the bend. Meet large party of Sonorans going to California. Their pleasure in meeting us. Their fear of Indians. They urge me to travel with them. I consent. Many presents of fruit and provisions in various forms. Reach the Gila River. Determine position of the junction with the Rio Grande.¹ Make bullboat—ferry women and children of the Sonorans across, with my party, and leave the bullboat for the men to complete their crossing.

Frémont was not merely undaunted; he believed that his fourth expedition had succeeded in its main object. "The survey has been uninterrupted up to this point," he wrote bravely from Taos to Jessie, "and I shall carry it on consecutively." Later, he publicly declared: "The result was entirely satisfactory. It convinced me that

¹ By this Frémont of course meant the junction of the Gila with the Colorado, which in these years was called the Rio Colorado Grande.

neither the snow of winter nor the mountain ranges were obstacles in the way of the road, and furnished me with a far better line [for a railway] than any I had previously known.”¹ He had hopes that, if the continuance of his labors as an explorer proved to have been useful, the President who was about to succeed Polk would take him back into government service for work upon the coast.

For the rest, he looked forward to making a new home for Jessie, whose arrival he expected in March. The immediate prospect before him was one of contention and legal fighting before he could even claim the land upon which he had set his heart. When he gave Larkin the \$3,000, it was to purchase a chosen property on the hills some distance back of San Francisco. Its old orchards and vines and its atmosphere of peace and rest had appealed strongly to him, while its view out over the sea recalled to him his Charleston boyhood. But by some rather suspicious error Larkin had bought instead a wild tract of land in the Sierra foothills, more than a hundred miles from the ocean and nearly that far from any settlement—the famous Mariposas tract, seventy square miles in area. Hostile Indians roamed the region in such numbers that it was impossible to reside there, or to pasture cattle, which would have been quickly destroyed. The land was apparently almost worthless. Frémont had been outraged when, just before leaving California as Kearny’s pris-

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 391.

oner, he had learned of this, and had told Larkin that he would return to demand a just settlement. He had consulted with Senator Benton, whose long experience in land cases arising from the Louisiana Purchase had made his advice valuable, and had laid plans to institute a lawsuit. He meant to get either the property originally selected, or his \$3,000.

But despite the dubious outlook, Frémont wrote confidently to Jessie. "I make frequent pleasant pictures," he told her, "of the happy home we are to have, and oftenest and among the pleasantest of all I see our library with its bright fire in the rainy stormy days, and the large windows looking out upon the sea in the bright weather. I have it all planned in my own mind." In-correctible dreamer and poet! But all his plans for exploring, for a career at the bar, for developing a ranch, were suddenly transformed when he learned the news which, coming from California during 1848, had electrified the civilized world.

CHAPTER XXV

GOLCONDA AND THE SENATORSHIP

THE dramatic vicissitudes which make Frémont's life so romantic, the almost incredible alternations of disaster and good fortune which mark its course, were never better illustrated than now. Emerging from a humiliating court-martial, he had just been thrown into the jaws of death, and had escaped only after terrible suffering and loss. But already Fortune was spinning her wheel. She was about to toss into his lap a seat in the Federal Senate, and an estate of such richness that within a few years it would be valued by cool-headed business men at ten million dollars.

The rough notes of Frémont's which we have just printed indicate the general course of his overland journey from Taos. At Santa Fé, he dined with the military governor of the territory, Colonel Washington, and at Socorro with the local commandant. Pursuing a general southwesterly line, he penetrated well into Mexico, touching Santa Cruz in that republic, and then turned northwest to Tucson in what is now Arizona. From this point, his line of march was down the Gila along the south bank. Here he descried in the distance one blazing forenoon a cloud of dust, in which vague figures drifted along the river margin. Hurrying on,

he overtook a whole community on the move—Jessie Frémont says 1,200 men, women, and children; babies crying, drivers hallooing, mules dragging lurching carts, and horses burdened with packs. Spurring up beside the rear guard, he asked, "Where are you going?" "Alta California," came the reply. "Why such a crowd of you?" demanded the puzzled Frémont. "Gold! Gold!" was the answer.

It was the first news Frémont had received of the discovery of gold on Sutter's property. Word had traveled most rapidly by sea; it had reached the ports of western Mexico—Guaymas, Mazatlan, Colima—before it penetrated to Tucson; and all Sonora was alive with the excitement which had emptied San Francisco and Monterey in a rush for the goldfields. These Sonora Mexicans were on their way to the diggings. Frémont acted with characteristic impetuosity. Mariposa might be the best property after all. He leaped to the conclusion that gold would be found on his new lands, and promptly engaged twenty-eight Mexicans to work for him. He was to grubstake them, they were to contribute their muscle and skill, and the gold was to be equally divided.

Frémont, with his now impressive cavalcade, pressed on rapidly to Los Angeles and Monterey, where he expected Jessie to be already waiting for him. He little guessed what his wife had been through. She had crossed the Isthmus safely under the escort of her brother-in-law, Jacobs. It had been a horrible trip; she went up

the Chagres River by slowly poled boats, burned by the sun, tormented by flies and mosquitoes, drinking dirty water, eating hastily cooked food, fearing the fever at every move; thence she crossed the rest of the way by mule train, sleeping at the camps of railway surveyors. Her brother-in-law marveled at her courage. "He judged, as we all do," she wrote later,¹ "by appearances. As there were no complaints or tears or visible breakdown, he gave me credit for high courage, while the fact was that the whole thing was so like a nightmare, that one took it as a bad dream—in helpless silence." When she arrived in Panama on the west coast, she was overtaken by "forty-niners" from New York, who brought word of the tragic fate of the fourth expedition; and here she also received Frémont's long letter from Taos, giving a full account of the disaster. At the same time, she learned that there was no boat to take her on north.

The vessel on which she had expected to proceed to California had not returned, for all its men had deserted to rush for the mines, and the captain was fuming helplessly in San Francisco Bay. Steamer after steamer was arriving on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus, and discharging thousands of eager gold hunters, who hurried across to the Pacific—and then sat down and swore. Fortunately, Jessie bore letters of introduction, which rescued her from the hotel, with its intolerable heat, noise, and dirt. She went to the home of

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *A Year of American Travel*, 56.

Mme. Arcé, a cultivated widow, and, worn out by anxiety for Frémont and by hardship, promptly collapsed. A friend named Mr. Gray one morning brought her a newspaper containing a letter of her father's describing the Frémont expedition, and in the evening, when he returned with further news, he found her sitting exactly as he had left her, the paper in her hand and her forehead purple from congestion of the brain. All Mme. Arcé's tender nursing was needed.

As she was regaining her strength after a fever which had almost brought her to a sudden grave, one night in the stillness she heard the signal gun of a steamer far out at sea. There was an instant uproar in the town. By scores, by hundreds, the Americans rushed clattering and shouting down the street to the ramparts, while the excitable natives filled the streets screaming "*El vapor!*" When the hubbub was at its height, there suddenly came, from another quarter, a second signal gun. Two steamers were in the offing. Wrapped in her dressing gown, and watching from a balcony, Jessie saw men weeping and hugging one another as if they were Crusoes being taken from some desert island. One ship, the *Panama*, had rounded the Horn; the other, the *California*, had scraped together a crew and come down from San Francisco. The next morning Jessie was waited upon by the captain of the *Panama* and by a naval officer, who told her she was to take their vessel. She went aboard still beset by fears for Frémont's safety, but at San Diego she was greeted by news that

he had arrived and had hurried on to San Francisco. "I think every man on the ship," she says, "came to tell me and say a choking word of joy for me."¹

As her daughter Lilly relates the story, when the ship ran into San Diego, Jessie locked herself into her cabin, fearful of the tidings she might hear. The first men to board the vessel knocked at her door and called out: "The colonel's safe; riding up to San Francisco to meet you; he didn't lose a leg—was only badly frostbitten!"²

Carried ashore through the surf to what is now the foot of Montgomery Street, San Francisco, Jessie found that Frémont had not yet arrived. She also found the region wild with excitement. San Francisco was a half-deserted town; deserted, that is, by its original inhabitants, and peopled mainly by newcomers counting the hours until they could get away to the interior. No servants could be had except half-trained Indians and Chinese. Mrs. Frémont was told that "time was worth fifty dollars a minute." The people lived as transients would be expected to live, in tents of dirty canvas, shanties knocked together with odd pieces of wood, or ragged shelters of blankets. The one really good private house in these first roaring "days of old, and days of gold, and the days of '49," was a two-story frame structure shipped out complete by a New Yorker, with furniture to fill it, at a cost said to reach \$90,000. It had been intended for a bride, and had witnessed her

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *Souvenirs*, 188.

² *Elizabeth Frémont MSS.*

death a few weeks after it was erected. The only settled residents, besides a small corps of tradesmen who realized that the retail business was surer and richer than any placer venture they were likely to find, were the military officers, who stuck courageously to their posts. One of the wealthier merchants, a man named Howard, found for Jessie a well-built adobe house of one story, with fine furniture, a Broadwood piano, veranda, and garden—the house of the late Russian consul, Leidesdorff. She was even fortunate enough to obtain a white woman as servant and companion—at \$240 a month; a woman who left in a huff when it was made clear that she was not Mrs. Frémont's social equal, and could not borrow her dresses to wear to a dance.¹

Ships were now coming into the port in a steady stream, many of them fifty or sixty days from New York, some forty days from Australia, and some direct from Europe. As they discharged their cargoes and men, San Francisco underwent a swift change in appearance. High piers were hurriedly built out into the Bay. The ragged streets of shanties and tents, with the winds blowing furious clouds of dust down them, stretched farther and farther back over the hills. Everywhere stood buildings of all shapes and sizes, in all stages of construction. Many were mere canvas-covered sheds, open in front. Masses of merchandise were piled higgledy-piggledy in the open air, sometimes under a

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *A Year of American Travel*, 100.



TWO CALIFORNIA TOWNS OF GOLD-RUSH DAYS

(The top view is a familiar print of Sacramento in 1849; the lower view is of Shasta City in 1855.)

dirty tarpaulin, sometimes exposed. They displayed rudely painted signs in every European tongue and advertising every ware; while prominent among these "stores" rose several hotels—the Frémont Family Hotel, a two-story structure, the Parker House, the City Hotel, and others—all crammed to bursting.

Along the public ways, ankle-deep in dust, crowded people of every nationality and description: Yankees nasal and electric, guttural Germans, nervous Frenchmen, burly Britons, Chinese with swinging pigtailed, Californians wrapped in serapes, Chileans, Kanakas, and Malays with long kreeses.¹ Far back from the water front lay the plaza (called Portsmouth Square after the warship which Frémont had found here in '47), with a high flagpole marking the adobe customhouse. Military forces policed the town. The atmosphere was one of feverish activity. Everyone was talking of claims, of diggings, of town lots, of the new cities of Sacramento and Stockton; everyone hoped to get rich.

The hurry, the wild new monetary standards, and the speculative spirit bewildered the newcomer. A porter who carried one's bags a few blocks demanded \$2 in payment; an old New York newspaper sold at \$1 a copy; and truckmen driving for merchants of the town made \$15 or \$20 a day. The sudden wealth had attracted an army of gamblers and saloon keepers. At least \$60,000 a year in rent was paid by the gamblers who occupied most of the second story of the Parker

¹ Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire*, 55.

House. A canvas tent near by called "Eldorado" by the faro and monte men who occupied it, only fifteen by twenty feet in size, was rented for \$40,000 a year. A wandering easterner who wished to hang out his shingle as a lawyer was shown a cellar dug in the ground and told he could have it for \$250 a month. All business was transacted with a rush, and men who tried to bargain were brushed impatiently aside.

If a customer entered a store, the owner eyed him with indifference, named the price he wanted for a given article, and turned away if the customer objected. Money in smaller amounts than a quarter-dollar did not pass current. The large-minded attitude toward financial affairs was seen at its best in the implicit trust which men were perforce compelled to place in one another's honesty. Loans were made without security, and repaid punctually. Yet the gambling spirit pervaded every group. Bayard Taylor, watching curiously one of the crowded "hells" where sperm-oil lamps lighted up the players' excited features, saw a boy of fifteen coolly pocket \$500; one of his fellow travelers from Panama lose \$2,400; and a hard-bitten miner betting great piles of gold dust on a single throw, and finally losing his last hundred ounces at a stroke.¹

When Frémont had finally arrived and exchanged with Jessie the history of the past eventful six months, the two looked earnestly for a home in this rushing beehive. The town changed with visible speed—men said

¹ *Eldorado*, 60.

that it grew daily by from fifteen to thirty houses. There was now an ebb tide or backwash from the mines, as well as a tide setting steadily toward them. Broken-down, sick and disheartened prospectors were returning from the diggings, and doing what they could to dampen the ardor of the newcomers. As the town leaped up to a population of 6,000, its business and professional life increased in vigor. Here the Frémonts met well-known men: Major Derby ("John Phoenix"), who had come on Jessie's ship and had organized theatricals to divert her; Edwin Bryant of Kentucky; the artist Osgood, who after three months in the hills had set up his easel as a portrait painter; and T. Butler King. But they could not make themselves quite comfortable in San Francisco. The trade winds injured Jessie's lungs; moreover, it was too far from their new ranch, Mariposa.¹ They therefore betook themselves south to Monterey, where they were only one hundred and twenty-five miles as the crow flies (about one hundred and forty miles by road) from the estate. A wing of the governor's house, the largest and best building in town, was thrown open to them, Mme. Castro and her children occupying the other half.

For the next few months Jessie, rapidly recovering her health, enjoyed with characteristic zest her life in this adobe house of red-tiled roof, with its spacious gardens and hedges of pink roses of Castile. They had Indian men for kitchen service, and she soon mastered

¹ *Elizabeth Frémont MSS.*

the art of cookery with little meat, no fowls or eggs, no milk or butter, and not even potatoes¹—for the swarming gold seekers had devoured all. She made friends with Mme. Castro, whose husband was still exiled in Mexico, but who felt no resentment for their lost position and fortune. Among the army officers then in Monterey, General Riley, General Smith, and young W. T. Sherman, who was thin and consumptive-looking, with a bad cough, she found congenial acquaintances. Frémont made a trip to San Francisco, and “with man-like prodigality, sent down what would have fitted up the whole large Castro House.” There were bales of Chinese satins and French damasks to use for draperies and hangings, boxes of French and Chinese porcelain, bamboo couches and chairs, and wonderfully carved and inlaid Chinese furniture. The house had a large fireplace, and Jessie threw down grizzly-bear skins to give warmth to the mat-covered floors, and to lend a cosy air to recesses between the satin-cushioned sofas and armchairs. Her Indian boys, Gregorio and Juan, shot doves and squirrels, and, broiling them upon sticks before the fire, would bring them to them at the most unusual hours. Jessie later wrote of the whole experience with enormous pleasure:

This was my first house and my first housekeeping—without any of what we consider indispensable necessities of servants, or usual supplies, but most comfortable and most charming. We had the

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

luxuries of life, if not its necessities. Youth, health, and exultant happiness can do without commonplaces, though it *is* awkward to have only Indian men for kitchen service, and to study a cookery book and try to follow its directions with no staples. Whatever could be put up in glass or tins we had in quantity—and rice is a great reliance when you learn its many uses. . . . Again, I was in the homekeeping domestic atmosphere of Spanish women, who offered me every help, though they could not give what they themselves did not have in this locust-like sweeping away of every green thing and no replanting, for Californians too were off to the placers, and speculators had bought up all attainable cattle and sheep for San Francisco. The expenses for army people were too great up there, so headquarters were at Monterey, and there General Riley planted cabbages and sweet women grew tired but laughed over their contrivances, and were hospitable and helping in spite of all drawbacks. General, then Major Canby, was stationed there, and his most amiable gentle wife was a centre of helping good will. They had an excellent cook, a Mexican who had followed the general after the war, and who did not leave them now even to go to the placers. Mrs. Canby took pity on my tinned biscuit diet, and regularly her man came with the fragrant loaf of fresh bread wrapped in its delicate napkin and sent on a plate of fine green

enamelled Chinese china. Who could need cream with tea, to make that a breakfast of delight to mind as well as palate? Mme. Castro, true to the gentle nature of Spanish women, sent daily a cup of milk for my little girl, for she had saved a cow for her children. This was another turn of the wheel. I had the name which represented to her total loss, for her husband had not returned from Mexico after we took her country, and yet her motherly feelings were stronger than the natural resentment for lost position and fortune. She had, though, the innate Spanish pride. A birthday among her children made the opportunity for giving a coral necklace they had admired on my child. The little Modesta brought it back with her soft-voiced message. "My mamma says, if it is a present, yes; if it is pay for the milk, no."

Frémont was now spending all the time he could spare at the Mariposas ranch, which he had found a singularly attractive place. From high up in the central Sierras, the Mariposa River flows west to join the San Joaquin. To the northeast, some forty miles away, lies the Yosemite; below, toward the Pacific, stretches the hot central valley. Covering a large segment of the Mariposa basin, the estate comprised the high eminence which they called Mount Bullion, in honor of Senator Benton—"Old Bullion"—picturesque wooded foothills of the Sierras, and broad green flats waving with grass.

To reach it in summer from Monterey, the traveler had to ride across the scorching plains of the San Joaquin Valley, where the temperature often rose high above 100 degrees, and ford a number of rushing streams like the Tuolumne. When, through clouds of suffocating dust, he came to slopes covered with the butterfly tulips, which gave the ranch its name, and caught a breath of cooler air, he was nearing his destination. Farther up, where Frémont's estate lay, the sparkling atmosphere and the feeling it gave of freshness and elasticity made the sun, still very hot, quite endurable. Bear Valley, in which he soon built a pleasant two-story frame house, was a little natural paradise. Pine trees, six or eight feet in diameter, towered two hundred feet into the air; the streams were full of salmon; the ground was covered with red clover; at night in summer, blankets were required. Not many years before, this spot had been the favorite hunting ground of the Cauchile Indians.¹ The precise boundaries of the 43,000 acre estate, according to the frequent Mexican practice, were not fixed, and the grantee, as the government decided later, had the right of locating the land on any claim within a large area.

Making Monterey his headquarters, Frémont led a life of incessant activity, and Jessie was much of the time at his side. They had a six-seated surrey, the only carriage in the territory, fitted with every convenience. Lilly recalls that for a time after mules were obtained

¹ John R. Howard, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Ch. 9; Bigelow, *Frémont*, 380.

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for this vehicle they were perfect nomads, sleeping as much in the open as under a roof. Jessie would have the cushions drawn together in the surrey to form a mattress; the little girl would go to sleep in the boot; and Frémont and the other men would bunk in the open on their blankets or in hammocks strung to the trees.¹ In time they obtained an Englishwoman, newly landed from Australia, as their housekeeper in Monterey, and Jessie writes that "she brought English comfort and thoroughness into everything about me."

Meanwhile, fortune smiled as never before. The Sonora miners had been sent to Mariposa without delay and were busy prospecting and extracting the gold from the river gravel. Bayard Taylor, riding into San José as a correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, happened upon Frémont as the explorer was returning from his first trip to the diggings. They shook hands upon the porch of a private house. Frémont wore a California garb, with sombrero and native-style jacket. Taylor was struck by his deep-set, hawklike eyes, his bold aquiline nose, and his thin, weather-beaten face; above all, by the compactness of his bodily build—"I have seen in no other man the qualities of lightness, activity, strength, and physical endurance in so perfect an equilibrium." His refinement of manner and polished address, unroughened by the camp life of months, also impressed the journalist. Frémont was now a man of greater note than ever. The East, its curiosity aroused

¹ Elizabeth B. Frémont, *Recollections*, 26.



TWO EARLY VIEWS OF SAN FRANCISCO

(From the *Weekly Illustrated London News*, 1850. The topmost view shows the town as it must have appeared to the Frémonts from their hilltop residence.)

by the gold rush, was reading his reports on the West with insatiable appetite.

After a brief period in the old capital the Frémonts went back temporarily to San Francisco, where they established a home on some land which the Colonel had purchased, later (Jessie says) the site of the Palace Hotel. He bought and set up a ready-made Chinese-built house, which fitted together like a puzzle, the only nails being those which fastened the shingles to the roof. Walls and floors were grooved together, and doors and windows slid into their places like some exquisite piece of cabinet-work. The family slept on grass hammocks covered with navy-blue blankets. Since the house was small, Frémont often placed his own bunk in the carriage on the sand dunes outside. Some of the most interesting men of the booming new city rode over frequently when the day's work was done and in frontier fashion ate a hearty dinner with the Colonel. A house-man whom they had luckily kept served as cook; they had all the resources of the San Francisco markets for food; and they drank exquisite wines which had come out from France. In good weather the dinner was served outdoors, with the tables placed on the sand dunes, the blue sky overhead, the bay at their feet, and an extra touch of color added by the flowering lupines all about. Jessie relished the deference, amounting sometimes almost to worship, which was paid her, for women were rarities and men would walk many miles merely to see one. Among her friends

were Joseph Hooker, later the Civil War general, then a slim young officer; a Dr. Bowie of Maryland; Samuel Ward of epicurean fame; and adventurers who had roved in India, South America, and all parts of the world. This interlude pleased them all, but it closed when the rainy season sent Jessie and the children to Monterey again.¹

As soon as the news spread that Frémont's Sonoran helpers were washing out gold literally by the bucketful, a rush of other prospectors took place to the region. Shortly, two or three thousand were on the ground. Under the Mexican law, such a grant as Frémont had obtained gave no title to mineral rights, and public opinion regarded placer deposits, no matter on whose land, as general and unrestricted property. Frémont naturally made no effort to interfere with the army of prospectors swarming over his land. But the Sonorans, as the first comers, had an advantage over others. They washed out the gold in such quantities that it was sent down to Frémont's home in Monterey, so Jessie tells us, in hundred-pound buckskin sacks, worth not far from \$25,000 each.² The quantity sounds like an exaggeration, but unquestionably enormous sums were taken out; a negro servant of the Frémonts, named Saunders, whose family were still in slavery, but who had been offered them by the owner for \$1,700, was sent up to Mariposa to dig enough gold for the purchase, and

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.

² *A Year of American Travel*, 125.

soon obtained it. Unfortunately, the Sonorans did not get on well with the American newcomers. They left near Christmas for home; and as Frémont was too busy with politics at the moment to go to Monterey to divide the gold, he sent the miners the keys to his store-room there. They made the division themselves, and took not a single ounce more than their just share.

To say that Frémont was busy with politics is to say merely that as the most prominent citizen of California he was inevitably caught into the current of public affairs. With unexampled rapidity, a new state had been built out of an almost unpeopled land. In the year 1849, more than 80,000 emigrants, three-fourths of them Americans, reached the Coast. The population at the end of the year was well above 100,000, exclusive of Indians, and still growing by tremendous leaps. Already a convention of delegates, sitting at Monterey during September, had framed an anti-slavery constitution and applied for admission to the Union. Of this convention, one of the most picturesque bodies of its kind ever seen in America, Frémont was, rather strangely, not a member. The president was none other than the seven-foot Dr. Robert Semple, familiar to us as one of the leaders and, later, the Thucydides of the Bear Flag War; he was escorted to his seat by Captain Sutter and General Vallejo; the official reporter was that rhetorical journalist and traveler, J. Ross Browne; and the members chose as the first secretary of state Henry Wager Halleck, who was later

to command the armies of the North in the Civil War. Bayard Taylor was an onlooker, and attended a gay dress ball in pantaloons lent him by an officer who weighed considerably more than two hundred pounds.¹ It was a distinguished as well as an amusing assemblage (one member objected to trial by a jury of peers on the ground that only aristocratic England had a peerage), and Frémont should have been present.

But he did use his influence, so far as it was needed, on behalf of free-soil principles. There proved to be a surprising absence of opposition to the clause in the bill of rights prohibiting slavery forever in California, even southerners supporting it. Men realized that the climate and the whole social order were inimical to slavery; that, as one grizzled mountaineer put it in haranguing an election-day crowd, "in a country where every white man makes a slave of himself there is no use in keeping niggers."² The Frémonts themselves had resolutely treated slavery as a disgrace. A Texas gold-seeker offered to sell them a strong young mulatto woman, but Jessie indignantly refused. Frémont was told by the advocates of slavery that "You will be the richest man in the world if your mines are worked by slave labor," but he rejected the idea with scorn. Jessie tells us that fifteen members of the convention came in a body to hear from Thomas Hart Benton's daughter

¹ *Eldorado*, Ch. 16. See J. Ross Browne, *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California*, *passim*; Bancroft, *History of California*, VI, 280 ff.; Cardinal Goodwin, *Establishment of State Government in California*, 71 ff.

² *N. Y. Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1849.

that for no reason would she consent to own or use a slave.

From the beginning of the agitation for statehood, Frémont's name was before the people of California as a candidate for the Senate. He was known to be a Democrat, and to belong, in his opinions on national affairs, to the free-soil wing of that party. In this dislike for slavery, he and Jessie, influenced by their deepest instincts and by Senator Benton's views, had long been confirmed. Already the California Democracy was showing signs of a decided split upon the question, and the lines were being drawn which later resulted in the protracted political duel between the slavery leader, Gwin, and the free-soil leader, Broderick. To a politician who sent him a set of political questions, Frémont replied explicitly and at length. "By association, feeling, principle, and education," he said, "I am a Democrat." He believed in a central, national railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific, and would labor for its immediate location and construction. He defended his purchase of the Mariposa claim, and his financial transactions during his brief civil governorship in 1847.¹

This was in December, 1849. The same month, by a compromise between the anti-slavery and pro-slavery factions, the California legislature elected Frémont and William M. Gwin senators, and later, in drawing lots, Frémont received the short term. Of course the elec-

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 388-397.

tion had no validity until California was actually admitted to the Union. But Congress had already met; the question of bringing California and New Mexico in was the paramount issue before it, and it was believed that the famous explorer, with the influence of Benton to assist him, might prove a useful lobbyist in the national capital. He was expected to start for the East at once. It was further believed that, with his unequaled knowledge of the West, and his conviction that by his last exploring trip he had found the ideal route, he could do more than anyone else to hasten the building of the Pacific railroad. Jessie tells us how characteristically Frémont responded to the new challenge:¹

One evening of tremendous rain, when we were, as usual, around the fire, Mrs. McEvoy, with her table and lights, sewing at one side, myself by the other, explaining pictures from the *Illustrated Times* to my little girl, while the baby rolled about on the bearskin in front of the fire, suddenly Mr. Frémont came in upon us, dripping wet, as well he might be, for he had come through from San José—seventy miles on horseback through the heavy rain. He was so wet that we could hardly make him cross the pretty room; but . . . the footmarks were all welcome, for they pointed home. He came to tell me that he had been elected Sena-

¹ *A Year of American Travel*, 159. On the first *viva voce* ballot for Senators, Frémont received twenty-nine votes, and Gwin twenty-four, the full strength of the Legislature being thirty-six members. See *Journals of the California Legislature*, 1850, pp. 23, 24.

tor, and that it was necessary we should go to Washington on the steamer of the first of January.

At daybreak the next morning he was off again, having to be back in San José. A young sorrel horse, of which Mr. Frémont was very fond, brought him down and carried him back this 140 miles within 36 hours, without fatigue to either.

On New Year's night of 1850, with the rain pouring torrents and every street in Monterey a stream, Frémont bore Jessie in his arms down to the wharf and they embarked for New York *via* the Panama route. The sudden return East meant the abandonment of many plans. Mariposa had to be left under the oversight of California friends. Their hopes for a quiet life, a cessation of struggle, had to be given up. They had meant to stay seven years, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot, our first object to live our lives in independence," but the gold rush and statehood had made that impossible. To both of them it cost a pang to leave the free outdoor life of the West. Jessie had brought all her natural vivacity and gusto to the camping excursions, when in some mountain glade they would eat venison, drink claret, and afterward enjoy the camp fire talk of old Knight, the hunter, or the naval lieutenant, Edward F. Beale; she had delighted in the gay, hospitable Californians, with their families of twelve or fifteen children, their profuse hospitality, their

folk songs and serenades, their *guisada* and other dishes, their three-day marriage feasts, their incomparable horsemanship, and their picturesque dress—the velvet jackets, gold embroidery, slashed trousers, and jingling bells of the men making them look like figures out of an opera. She had enjoyed playing the hostess herself, and during the progress of the constitutional convention, when Frémont was fearful lest the slavery element might prove strong, and when many of his old friends and opponents, from Sutter to Castro, were in town, she had kept open house and laden her table with dainties.

Yet Frémont would have been more than human had he not felt a certain exultation in the changed circumstances of his return east. A year and a half earlier he had been traveling west on the Great Lakes, an impoverished young man of bleak prospects, who had just resigned from the Army. Now he was coming back a senator-elect, his trunk full of buckskin bags of gold dust, with the title to one of the richest tracts on the Coast in his possession. What a transformation! An English man of war, at anchor off Mazatlan, fired a salute in his honor and that of Mr. Gwin, and lowered the captain's gig to put Frémont and Jessie ashore. He had even been given the satisfaction of an expression from President Taylor of the Government's confidence in him. The Chief Executive, no doubt partly to please Benton, had, in June, 1849, appointed him a commissioner to run the boundary line with Mexico, and



VALLEJO IN 1851

(Vallejo, named after Gen. Mariano Vallejo, was made the State Capital by his efforts in 1851. The Legislature met here in 1851, '53, and Fremont knew the town, which is only twenty-four miles from San Francisco, well. From an old print.)

Frémont had accepted the place, resigning it, however, immediately afterward. No one in Washington would be able to sneer at him. Jessie, too, who was still ailing in health and had grown homesick, was glad to return with her two children—a boy, named John Charles, had been born in California—to her father and invalid mother.

Before Frémont and his wife had reached Panama both were ill, Jessie with some unnamed malady which she says put her in danger of dying, and Frémont with an attack of rheumatic fever in the leg which had been so badly frostbitten in the San Juan Mountains. They were taken to Mme. Arcé's home and nursed back to sufficient health to enable them to continue their travels. Lying on cots in her big ballroom, which was made the sick chamber because of its coolness, they were regularly visited by the explorer Stephens, who was also fever ridden, and who used to say, "I have come to take my chill with you." Running up from Colon to New York, Jessie was again attacked and grew worse; a gale which buffeted the ship till she had to be lashed to a sofa made her so desperately ill that she was later told that by all the laws of medicine she should have died. Frémont himself had meanwhile been seized with Chagres fever, and was in bed. But at last they were safe home; on September 9, 1850, California was admitted to the Union, and immediately afterward Frémont took his seat as one of her senators.

CHAPTER XXVI

EUROPE OF THE FIFTIES

FRÉMONT had risen to a pinnacle where his opportunities were far greater than ever before. He had wealth; he had political office and power; he had a reputation as the foremost explorer of the West. He was a busy man of affairs, supervising his estate, laboring for the cause of free-soil Democracy in Washington and California, traveling, and answering scientific inquiries. His ambitions were now definitely dual in nature, for he hoped to be one of the statesmen of the new West as well as the pathfinder who blazed its highways. Five years were to pass before he was to be widely talked of as a presidential candidate. What did he do in these years to satisfy his two ambitions?

Thus far Frémont's life had been shaped largely by personal forces—Poinsett, Nicollet, Benton, Jessie, Kearny; now there enters the drama a powerful and sinister impersonal force—the Mariposa estate. For the next fifteen years this ten-league grant, rich in gold and grazing land, was to dominate a great part of Frémont's activities. Promising him wealth and happiness, it was to bring him in the end little but trouble and disappointment. Appearing a beneficent stroke of luck, it was destined before it vanished to look rather

like some malignant fate. It did more to govern—and in the large view to warp—his career than any other single element.

The only way to give Mariposa its true significance is to treat it, not in a business light, but as one of the great controlling influences upon Frémont's course. Its business history is a thorny and profitless maze. From the outset the estate proved to be a perfect Pandora's box of complications. Its boundaries were undetermined; it was difficult to get an American title, for Congress in 1851 passed an act refusing confirmation to any California titles without absolute written proofs of ownership, and the papers of the Mexican administration were nailed up in various repositories; while the region abounded in land jumpers. Throughout the state, there were a half-dozen years of chaos, many settlers taking up unauthorized abodes wherever they pleased, and defending them with shotguns. Frémont's Sonorans, with the first flood of other miners, quickly exhausted the placer deposits in the Mariposa area. There remained, not merely its vast possibilities in grain and cattle growing, but plain evidences of gold-bearing quartz—Alexander Godey picked up the first gold-veined rock—which would pay richly but require capital to exploit.

Within a year Frémont began to learn that the Mariposa was a will-of-the-wisp, beckoning him forward with promises of stupendous wealth, sometimes placing small gifts within his grasp, and yet always

cheating him. In June, 1850, he authorized an agent named David Hoffman to act for him in London and to organize mining companies upon the basis of leases.¹ At the same time, Frémont sold some other leases to Thomas Denny Sargent, who disposed of them in Great Britain at a large profit. Senator Benton was struck by Sargent's enterprise, and having received a power-of-attorney from Frémont, he agreed with Sargent that he should take over the whole tract for a million dollars. Sargent seems to have made his first payment, to have gone to England, hustled about there, convinced capitalists of the value of the property, and concluded arrangements for its resale at a handsome price. Meanwhile, Hoffman had made important business arrangements of his own in London, and was filled with consternation to learn that the area had suddenly been whisked from beneath his feet. He protested, while Frémont declared that he had never authorized a sale. It was a very pretty and complicated quarrel till Frémont cut through it in the fall of 1851 by ordering a temporary suspension of all transactions with regard to Mariposa.

It was high time that he did so, for he was by no means certain that the Government would recognize his claim to the land, and a long course of litigation, which finally landed him in the Supreme Court, was looming up ahead. His claim was duly filed before the Federal commissioners in the opening days of 1852,

¹ David Hoffman, *The Frémont Estate: An Address to the British Public*.

and by the autumn of 1853 was being fought out with Attorney-General Caleb Cushing in the Federal District Court. Even if Frémont got the land, he might well be refused title to the minerals. But the explorer was still exuberantly confident of becoming a millionaire, and had embarked upon efforts to develop the property with money of his own, and funds of the San Francisco banking house of Palmer, Cook & Co.¹ Of these efforts we shall soon say more.

He had the more time for Mariposa in that his senatorial career had been brief, and his ambitions to succeed himself had proved abortive. He sat in Congress only three weeks, then returning to California to electioneer for the term beginning in March, 1851. During these three weeks, he introduced eighteen useful bills to satisfy the political and economic needs of his state, and made numerous brief speeches upon this legislation; he voted with other free-soil senators for the bill abolishing the slave trade in the District of Columbia; and he came into violent collision over his California land bill with Senator Foote of Mississippi. Frémont was at fault in this collision, for he took umbrage at some perfectly innocent though rather tactless remarks by Foote; but happily the only consequence was the effusion of a great deal of newspaper ink. It was a characteristic illustration of his hot-headedness. Once back in California, he found that the pro-slavery wing of the Democratic party had grown in strength. Had

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, July 5, 1856. Montgomery Blair of St. Louis was at once enlisted as one of his legal counsel.

his health been good, he might have done more to rally the free-soil element. But in December he was taken ill, and, as Senator Benton said in Congress, was chained to his bed "by sciatica, rheumatism, neuralgia," paying the penalty of his past exposures. Jessie hurried out from the East to nurse him. The legislative balloting came on in February, 1851; more than 140 votes were taken, and he was decisively defeated, though no choice was made. Nearly a year later, Colonel John B. Weller, of the now easily dominant slavery faction, was elected in his stead.

Frémont would have liked nothing better than to continue in the arena of state and national politics, but the situation was unfavorable to a man of his temperament. The population of California was still rising like an irresistible tide, and the voters were a rough, heterogeneous lot who responded readily to the arts of the demagogue. The census of 1850 gave the state 122,000 people. That summer the flood of emigration was such that 9,270 wagons passed Fort Laramie on the California and Oregon Trail, and 42,000 persons registered with the commandant.¹ In 1852, the torrent overflowed all bounds. Before the close of May more than 2,600 wagons, more than 26,000 cattle, and some 11,000 men, women, and children had reached Fort Kearny on the way to the Coast. On the principal trails, the roads seemed almost a continuous line of covered wagons. San Francisco had sprung up into a great sprawling city,

¹ John Bach McMaster, *United States*, VIII, 58.

with many miles of graded streets, ambitious blocks of business buildings, and flimsy residences which proved food for a series of conflagrations. The majority of the newcomers were rude and illiterate frontier folk, or urban adventurers. They mingled in California with Mexicans, Chileans, swarms of Europeans, men from the British penal colonies, and Chinese. The French Government had taken deliberate measures for sending a large body of the Garde Mobile, a turbulent body which Louis Napoleon had at one time found useful, but which had proved too troublesome to keep in Paris. But the convicts and ne'er-do-wells from Botany Bay and Sydney, who "escaped" to California in shiploads, were the most vicious of all; and they gave the English immigrants in general a bad name.

Racial antagonisms were intense; while the resentment which the landless squatters felt against the great estate owners like Frémont was strong. Disorder seemed to increase steadily. The electorate could be played upon by such adept politicians of southern sympathies as Gwin, Weller, and the unprincipled Governor John Bigler,¹ but it was instinctively hostile to such a man as Frémont.

To Mariposa and other business, therefore, Frémont gave most of 1851. Always restless, always inclined to speculation, he did not confine himself, as common sense dictated, to his estate. His most impetuous venture was a contract for supplying beef to the Indians.

¹ Cf. Cardinal Goodwin, *The Establishment of State Government in California*.

The overrunning of the foothills and valleys by miners had driven many of the savages from their old hunting grounds; and pressed by hunger, they commenced killing live stock belonging to the whites. The settlers retaliated. There seemed danger of a general Indian war, which would wipe out isolated miners and prospectors, and commissioners were hastily sent to treat with the tribes. It was plainly necessary to furnish them beef; but when the commissioners sought for cattle, they found that the ranchers were trying to take advantage of the emergency by demanding exorbitant prices. Frémont happened to have some interests in cattle, and he offered to furnish the entire amount of beef at the usual rates; an offer which the commissioners accepted as "the lowest and best yet made by any responsible man."¹ The sum involved amounted to nearly a fifth of a million dollars, but, with his usual ill luck in business, Frémont had a great deal of trouble in getting his money. The commissioners had no appropriation available, and special legislation by Congress was ultimately necessary to compensate the explorer for what was not merely a fair but a public-spirited transaction.² He had other irons in the fire at the same time. Leaving Jessie in San Francisco, where the disorders were growing dangerous and were resulting in incendiarism, he spent much time in the saddle or at Mariposa.

The first great San Francisco fire of 1851, that of

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² See full history of the matter in Senator Weller's speech, *Congressional Globe*, Aug. 11, 1856.

May 4, which destroyed at least seven million dollars' worth of property,¹ cost Jessie—who gave birth to another son that spring, and was confined to her bed at the time—a night of feverish excitement, but that was all. The Frémont home on Stockton Street, near the Plaza, was high up on the hillside, and her windows looked down into the sea of flames. At one time, it was necessary to hang soaking-wet carpets over the sides of the house to counteract the fierce heat; boxes of legal papers and silverware were taken to a friend's house on Russian Hill; while the hammock and blankets in which she was to be carried away, if necessary, were placed ready beside her bed. But friendly fire fighters, scorched and wet, ran in from time to time to reassure her. The second fire, late in June, proved much more dangerous, and it occurred while Frémont was at the Mariposas.²

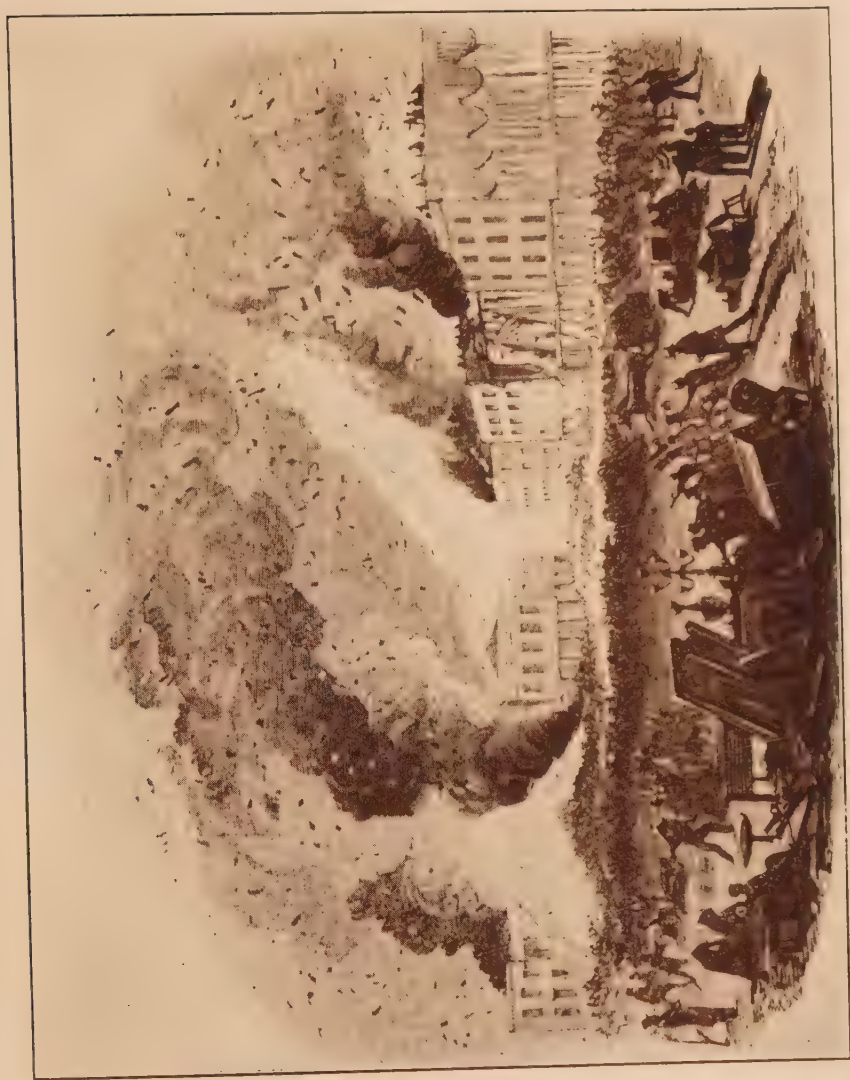
This conflagration started at ten o'clock on a Sunday morning, and it was soon clear that it would sweep away the Frémont residence. Jessie and her baby were taken to the home of a hospitable South Carolinian on a safe elevation not far away. Other refugees were gathered there. One of them was a young French-woman who had been very ill, and who took a large chair by a window overlooking the advancing fire. "Her wild fevered gaze was fixed on her burning home," writes Jessie. "Suddenly, with a crazy laugh, she rose

¹ J. S. Hittell, *San Francisco*, 168.

² *MS. Memoirs*.

and offered me her seat—*‘C’est votre tour, Madame; your house goes next,’* she said. And after we had made her lie down and let wet cloths be applied to the poor fevered head, I in my turn watched from that window the burning of my home.” Suffering from the shock, Jessie was transferred to one of the few houses available, a lonesome bare place, where she could do little more than camp out. Here, however, she met an unexpected piece of good fortune. Frémont had invested in a considerable tract of land in the city, and had leased it to an industrious, cleanly colony of English people, who had erected there a brewery and a number of cottages. They now came to the rescue in dramatic fashion:

A procession of our English tenants came to me carrying parcels and bundles, and leading small carts over the uneven sand drives. A middle-aged man and his wife led them and spoke for the others. When the fire began on Sunday, they said, they thought it might take the direction of our house; assuring themselves of this, they at once started in force to offer their services, but I had already gone. Then they proceeded to save everything; working with such cool method that mirrors, china, and glass, several hundred books, furniture, even kitchen utensils, and all our clothing, were saved in good condition. The motherly woman apologized for having laundered the soiled clothing, but, she



THE FOURTH GREAT SAN FRANCISCO FIRE, 1851
(Which drove Mrs. Frémont from her home. From the *Weekly Illustrated London News*.)

said, "I thought you might be so put about with the changing, the clothes would have long to wait." Then the man put down on the table a smaller but heavy parcel tied in a big red silk handkerchief. "We knew the master was from home," he said, "and there was a young babbie in the house, and we thought money might come in handy, so we brought a quarter's rent in advance"; untying the heavy red bundle and showing the heaps of silver and some gold. That made me cry—it was all so kind, so unexpected, and from people who were kept chilled by public ill-will.

When Frémont returned from Mariposa, he saw the sun shining on many acres—more than ten blocks—of smoking ashes. Of his own home, only a single shattered chimney remained. The city hospital had been burned; so had the office of the *Alta California*, the Jenny Lind Theatre, where the miners were entertained by rough and ready farces, and the "old adobe" on the Plaza, the last relic of the village of Yerba Buena.¹ He learned that Mrs. Frémont and the children were somewhere up the hill, near Grace Church—that was all his informants could tell him. Thousands were utterly homeless, shivering amid the chaparral and sand beside what fragments of their household possessions they had been able to save. Standing near the church, Frémont gazed about and identified Jessie's temporary

¹ *Alta California* files, June, 1851.

habitation by a set of upper windows where white muslin curtains with pink ribbons were fluttering in the fresh morning air; for, like her father, she insisted upon thorough ventilation. When he heard what the English tenants had done, he sent at once to thank them. They had previously asked him to sell them their home sites, and he had refused; but now he told them that as a mark of gratitude he would have deeds of sale prepared at once, at a low valuation. Decades later, Jessie could "remember clearly the dawning surprise and happiness lighting up the large-featured heavy faces, the hearty words of gratitude and the large grip of the very big hands as they thanked us."¹

Jessie's health had been affected by the ordeal of the two fires. She frequently woke at night to find herself groping at the window or the door, with the sound of fire bells haunting her ears. Both she and her husband disliked the rough society of the state, where lynch law was now in full ascendancy, and a vigilance committee had just been organized in San Francisco as a last desperate means of stopping the disorder and violence. Moreover, he was badly in need of capital to develop the Mariposa mines, and it was only in Europe that he could obtain the funds to buy machinery and erect ore mills. They therefore decided to sail for England, chiefly on what Jessie briefly called "Mariposa business," but partly in search of health, rest, and recreation.

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

What impression the history, the monuments, and the society of Europe made upon Frémont, who loved a lonely mountainscape better than a royal dinner party, we do not know; but the alert and social Jessie was in her element. Her pen has given us an animated record of the delights of transatlantic travel. Even the discomforts were remembered later with pleasure. Missing the European steamer at Chagres, they went to New York, stayed four days (March 6-10, 1852) at the Irving Hotel, and took the Cunard side-wheel steamer *Africa* for Liverpool, the bracing cold of the North Atlantic driving away their touch of the Isthmus fever. The roomy, rolling old vessel, where they were quartered in the ladies' parlor, with the ship's library and an open fire all the way over, was delightful. In London rooms had been prepared for them at the Clarendon Hotel by the Marchioness of Wellesley, who had been one of the three beautiful Misses Caton of Maryland, and who had long known Jessie; while Abbott Lawrence, the American minister, and his wife, exerted themselves from the first day to make the newcomers welcome, and arranged what Mrs. Frémont called a terrifying program.

Jessie, it is clear, found every hour of the foreign sojourn enchanting. In her pages, we find a description of their meetings with the Duke of Wellington, dazed and abstracted in his old age; of dinners and teas at the important London houses; of an evening with Sir Roderick Murchison, president of the Royal Geographi-

cal Society; and of her presentation to Queen Victoria, who made an "impression of womanly goodness combined with a look of power."¹ From London, they went on to Paris early in May. Here they met a *grand seigneur*, the Comte de la Garde, who was connected by marriage with the Bonaparte family, and who was captivated by Jessie's vivacity and interest in life. He introduced them into the best Parisian society, and his talk and personality gave them glimpses into the most romantic and highly colored pages of French history. Later, when he died, he bequeathed Jessie a precious collection, chosen from among his treasures, to illustrate the topics of which they had often chatted: autographs, paintings by Isabey, water colors of Queen Hortense, and so on. Through his kindness, they were allotted places on the official tribune to view the grand military parade before the Prince-President, Louis Napoleon, at which the imperial eagles were restored to the French standards—a symbol that the end of the Republic was near.

To both Frémont and Jessie Paris seemed very homelike: to him because his father had been French, to her because the city was only a splendid amplification of the old French St. Louis with which she had been so familiar. She surrounded herself with French servants, two of whom came back with her to America, where they remained fifteen and twenty years respectively in the Frémont household. They took a whole house to

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *A Year of American Travel*.

themselves, Lady Dundonald's mansion in the Italian style on the Champs Élysées, between the Place de l'Étoile and Rond Point, and kept the children at home, with a governess to teach them. They kept an Irish coachman, had ponies for the youngsters, and every luxury that the heart could desire. They drove out to Versailles, Fontainebleau, and other points near Paris, staying overnight. They saw Rachel at the Théâtre Française, and went to the opera. Frémont spent a good deal of time in fencing and in long walks. He made numerous friends in the scientific world, obtained an introduction to Arago, and entertained lavishly. It is plain that the Mariposa estate was furnishing, in spite of all financial and legal tangles, a handsome revenue. Jessie relates a revealing incident of her husband. He was fascinated, she says, by a magnificent Cedar of Lebanon which shaded part of the lawn of the Lauriston Hotel near by; in all his camp life he had never seen anything like its great layered boughs. Under this spell, he "opened negotiations for the purchase of the hotel when we were told it was for sale."¹

From the Tuileries, thanks to the Comte de la Garde, came cards to every fête, ball, or other court occasion. Many of these affairs were dreams of splendor to the Americans. Once, for example, they went to *thé dansant* given by the Prince-President at St. Cloud, and found the magnificent rooms, the endless mirrors, and the brilliantly dressed company, a delightful sight. "Far

¹ MS. *Memoirs*.

below the steep hill was the Seine, and the Bois du Boulogne lay between the river and the city four or five miles away. A full moon was shining on this, and made a perfect picture as we sat by one of the great open windows." Louis Napoleon, short, fat, and dull-eyed, but impressive, entered, followed by a train of ladies and gentlemen in gay uniforms and lace and silk dresses, walked through the parted lines of guests, and seated himself above the diplomatic corps; and Jessie, who loved the theatrical, drew a sharp breath of admiration.¹

As a double climax, the Frémonts witnessed, in the closing days of 1852, the official entrance of Louis Napoleon as Emperor, and, in the first days of 1853, the pomp and pageantry which accompanied his marriage to Eugénie de Montijo. Jessie's house, with its balcony overlooking the Champs Élysées, was crowded with American friends and acquaintances when the new-made Emperor rode bowing through the avenue, twisting his long mustaches, and apparently quite unafraid—"alone, no troops, not a single officer within forty feet of him." From a different balcony, commanding a view of the Tuileries, they saw all the blare and circumstance of the imperial wedding: the grenadiers, Cent Gardes, and cavalry, emerging from the Grand Court and pouring like a river into the streets, where they made a compact military order with tens of thousands of brightly dressed people pressing behind; the military escort; the Marshal de Loestine, representing the First

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *Souvenirs*, 283.

Empire, and riding alone; and then the bride and groom in their glass coach, surmounted by a gold crown and swung like some great bonbonnière between the front and rear wheels. The Emperor and Empress sat beside each other on white satin seats, the former rigid and upright in brilliantly decorated uniform, with half-shut eyes, the latter as pale as some waxen image, and as rigidly still, like some figure in a painful dream. A far cry, all this, from the deserts and forests of the West.

As "Mariposa business" took the Frémonts to Europe, so now it and other financial perplexities quickly summoned them home. His title to the estate was still uncertain. His claim upon the national treasury for some \$180,000 upon the Indian beef contract was still unsettled. As yet the Government had not paid the bills which he had incurred for the California Battalion, and he had received a sharp reminder that he might be held personally liable for them. In London, early in April, 1852, as he was stepping into a carriage with Jessie to go to a dinner, he was arrested by a party of Bow Street officers, who were accompanied by an insolent clerk from a solicitor's firm. The four constables hurried him off to prison, and, despite his protests, he was kept there until the next day, when George Peabody furnished the necessary bail. This arrest was for the nonpayment of four drafts, amounting to \$19,500 and interest, which he had drawn as governor of California upon Mr. Buchanan as secretary of state, for

supplies furnished to the Battalion by one F. Huttman.¹ Buchanan could not pay these drafts when they were presented, for Congress had made no appropriation. Since the Government could not be sued, the holders of the notes concluded that the shortest way to get their money was to take the position that Frémont had acted upon his own responsibility in California. An expensive lawsuit against him at once began; and seeing that it might be followed by others, for amounts far beyond his ability to pay, Frémont hastily appealed to his friend Senator Gwin to press in Congress the old bill for payment of the claims arising from the conquest of California.²

While these affairs required his presence in America, Jessie had her own family reasons for returning. Benton had written her from St. Louis, in March of 1852, that her only brother Randolph was dead.³ A sudden illness had seized him just as he was about to enter St. Louis University. "His disease had all the violence of cholera, though bilious," wrote the Senator, "and quickly set his bowels on fire with inflammation. On the second day he became delirious, not from fever but agony, and with three lucid intervals towards the last day, knew little but the torment he suffered." Deeply

¹ *N. Y. Evening Post*, Sept. 19, 1856. Ultimately, Congress by act of March 3, 1854, paid the interest on the debt and the costs of the judgment against Frémont, amounting in all to \$48,814. But the original \$15,000 borrowed by Frémont was charged against him until he should prove that he had spent this money in the public service. He apparently never made any effective effort to prove that it was so used. See Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 465 ff.

² *Congressional Globe*, April 28, 1852.

³ *Benton MSS.*

attached to her brother, Jessie was for a time almost prostrated, and her eyes were weakened by her constant weeping. Finally, as a decisive reason for hurrying home, Frémont learned that an important piece of government exploration was about to be carried out. He immediately determined to share in it, and Arago himself helped him select his scientific instruments.

The Pacific railway enterprise had taken another long stride ahead. Congress, early in 1852, had ordered several routes to be explored to the Pacific, to afford a wide choice for the site; and it had apparently been understood by Benton that Frémont should head one of the various parties.¹ If this was so, the expectation was disappointed. Jefferson Davis, as Secretary of War, designated five different lines to be explored, and five different sets of men to do the work. One route, running along the 47th parallel through the Dakota and Montana country, was assigned to Captain George B. McClellan and Isaac I. Stevens; one running through Salt Lake City and the Humboldt Valley, to Lieutenant E. J. Beckwith; one between the 38th and 39th parallels, to Captain John W. Gunnison; one along the 35th parallel, west of Fort Smith in Arkansas, to Lieutenant A. W. Whipple; and the one farthest south, running through El Paso and Yuma, to Captain John W. Pope and others. Frémont was passed over.

Unquestionably the explorer felt a grievance in the fact, and with some reason. His fourth expedition had

¹ Cf. Jessie Benton Frémont, introduction to Frémont's *Memoirs*, xv.

been specifically designed to blaze a path for a railway between the 37th and 38th parallels, and he had given much publicity to his belief that he had surveyed there the best possible route. Senator Benton had been the foremost advocate in America of the transcontinental railway. No officer of the Army possessed so much practical experience of western exploration and surveying as Frémont; the name of none would carry so much weight in any official recommendation. But Jefferson Davis was a West Pointer; he had been with the regular Army till 1835 and had fought in it again during the Mexican War, and he felt that regular army officers were entitled to the preference. Frémont could not even protest. But he was not to be easily thwarted in his ambition to be the pathfinder for steam transportation, as he had been for the wagon trains of the emigrants; and leaving Paris in June, he took funds of his own and organized, in August, 1853, an expedition to complete the undertaking he had only partly finished in 1849. He was a free-lance explorer, determined to compete with and outstrip the army men employed by the Government.

“He chose the dead of winter for his exploration,” says Benton, “that he might see the worst—see the real difficulties and determine whether they could be vanquished. He believed in the practicability of the road, and that his miscarriage in 1848-49 was the fault of his guide, not of the country, and he was determined to solve those questions by the test of actual experience.”

This fifth, final, and, taken all in all, the least interesting of Frémont's expeditions, may be briefly dismissed. The two circumstances which give it what color and significance it possesses are that it once more led the explorer into dire peril and suffering, and that one member of the party, the artist and daguerreotypist, S. N. Carvalho, has left us a remarkably fresh and graphic description of Frémont as a leader.¹ The use of photography in western exploration was an interesting novelty. Preuss might have gone, but, after his sufferings in 1849, his wife would not permit him, and Jessie tells us that when he definitely saw that his glad free days in the open were over, he went out into the woods near Washington and hanged himself.² There were twenty-two members of the expedition in all, ten of them being Delaware Indians, and they set out westward from Kansas City, then Westport Landing, in the closing days of September, 1853.

Carvalho's book, which is all too brief, shows us Frémont in the sunset of his career as an explorer; the man who had traversed the whole wild and boundless West, the woods of Oregon, the sands of Mexico, the plains of Minnesota, the waters of the Great Salt Lake, the crests of the Sierras, at the height of his experience and dexterity. One set of pictures in the gallery illustrates Frémont's incessant watchfulness. In the after-midnight cold, when the sentries least expected it, he

¹ S. N. Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure. . . with Col. Frémont's Last Expedition* (1857).

² Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.

would suddenly appear, and the man who was caught napping had to expiate the offense by walking for a day or a week while the others rode. Once his vigilance, when other watchers nodded, prevented a band of Cheyennes from stampeding the whole body of horses and mules, and thus leaving the expedition without transport, six hundred miles from the frontier, at the onset of bitter winter weather, with hostile Comanche, Pawnee, and Sioux Indians awaiting a chance to wipe them out. At every alarming incident, the guards were doubled, guns examined, and anyone who, like Carvalho on one occasion, let snow get into the barrel of his piece, was severely lectured.¹ Other illustrations show us Frémont's prudence and tact. He was at great pains never to give any Indian, in barter for food or horses, either ammunition or firearms. Once, on the Grand River, the camp was aroused at supper by the approach of three score mounted Utah Indians, who galloped at full speed upon the whites, armed with rifles, bows, and knives, and displaying their powderhorns and cartridges conspicuously. They demanded payment for a fat young horse which the white men had recently killed for food, and for which they had already indemnified another band of savages. Frémont, as was his custom at such junctures, never showed himself, which increased the respect of the savages for "the Great Captain," and gave a mysterious impressiveness to his messages.

In this instance, Carvalho was greatly alarmed by the

¹ Carvalho, *Incidents*, 89, 90.

threatening demeanor of the Indians, but Frémont quickly reassured him. He knew them through and through, he said; they were simply blustering, and did not have powder enough to load a single rifle; "if they had any ammunition, they would have surrounded and massacred us, and stolen what they now demand and are parleying for." It proved to be the fact that their horns and cartridge boxes were empty.

The exploring party, which had no guide, followed the general line of the expedition of 1848-9 to the Sangre de Cristo Range, passed through it and the valleys beyond, and easily conquered the mountain obstacles which had previously been so disastrous by going through the Cochetope Pass, 9,088 feet high.¹ They found the snow very light in the valleys, and thus confirmed Frémont's opinion that a railway would be perfectly feasible. From here, they struck westward to the Uncompahgre River, and followed it, the Gunnison, and the Grand River till they arrived on the Green River in Utah. It is sufficient to say that his further travels, through an unknown country of mountains and canyons, almost every league of it toilsome and dangerous, carried him across a great part of central Utah and finally brought him out at the Mormon town of Parowan, in the southwest corner of that state, some sixty miles from the Nevada line; and to add that long before they reached this isolated settlement, the men

¹ Dellenbaugh, *Frémont and '49*, 437.

were starving and almost dead. At one time, even Frémont's strength seemed utterly exhausted.

Carvalho makes it clear that the hardships and sufferings which rose in a seemingly interminable crescendo simply brought out Frémont's highest qualities. He never allowed himself or others to be discouraged. On the occasion when he felt himself collapsing, he simply pointed out a spot near by as an admirable location for a camp, and ordered a stop there; the next morning, he was able to go on, and he never mentioned his weakness to his subordinates. No matter how much he was suffering from want of food, no matter how intense the cold or stormy the weather, he kept up his astronomical observations, sometimes standing for hours in the deep snow taking his bearings. He never lost his temper; he never dropped his dignity or acted with excitement. Not once, amid vicissitudes which tried everybody's patience, and in the face of stupidly irritating mistakes by his men, did Frémont forget that he was a gentleman; not once was there an oath or a display of uncontrolled anger. He gave his orders calmly, and they were always obeyed. The starvation and cold would have rendered some of the party insubordinate had the men not been handled with great tact, but "in no instance was a slight request of his received with anything but the promptest obedience." So warm was the devotion of the Delaware Indians that they would have gone to certain death for him. He never asked an offi-

cer or man to undertake duties which he was not willing to share.¹ And, says Carvalho:

Although on the mountains and away from civilization, Col. Frémont's lodge was sacred from all and everything that was immodest, light, and trivial; each and all of us entertained the highest regard for him. The greatest etiquette and deference were always paid to him, although he never ostensibly required it. Yet his reserved and unexceptionable deportment demanded from us the same respect with which we were always treated, and which we ever took pleasure in reciprocating.

Only twice did Frémont betray in any fashion the strain under which he labored. In the worst days of starvation, he took his scanty meal of mule-gristle or horse-entrail soup alone in his tent. This he explained by saying that it brought back such vivid memories of the tragic experience of 1849 that he wished for solitude; but Carvalho thought that the actual reason was that he wished to allow his companions free speech during their meals. He knew that they would grumble over their hard fate, and to save his feelings from being hurt he retired to his lodge. Again, when the first horse was killed for food, Frémont called his men together and addressed them with evident emotion. After emphasizing the terrible necessities to which they were reduced, he recalled the fact that during his last

¹ Carvalho, *Incidents*, 134.

expedition a party of men whom he sent out for succor had been guilty of eating one of their own number. He proposed that they should make a solemn compact that if they were to die, they should die together like men, and he threatened to shoot the first person who hinted at cannibalism. It was a solemn and impressive sight, says Carvalho, to see this body of Americans, Indians, and Mexicans, on a snowy mountain side at night, the stars sparkling above in the cold sky, entering into their fervent agreement.

Evidently the idea of cannibalism preyed upon Frémont's mind as it did upon that of the hero of Joseph Conrad's *Falk*. Because, later, one or two disgruntled followers of Frémont spread malicious stories of his poor qualities as a leader, Carvalho's testimony is important. A Capt. Aram of Santa Clara, California, who had served with Frémont in the California Battalion, a little later, in a campaign speech of 1856, told an anecdote illustrative of Frémont's consideration for his men. He said: "On his march down the coast the supplies were furnished by a commissary named King, who, finding the stock of groceries running short, being enabled to procure a limited quantity along the route, concluded to use them only at the officers' mess. Frémont noticing some new articles on the table, inquired how they came there. Upon being informed, he immediately ordered a parade next morning. After the battalion was formed, Frémont ordered the commissary to give a history of the transaction, and his inquiry as to

whether the rations had been distributed for the soldiers as well as officers being answered in the negative, he reprimanded Mr. King and informed him that upon a repetition of the offense he should be dismissed from the service." To this testimony may be added that of Godey, who praised "his daring energy, his indomitable perseverance, and his goodness of heart."¹

And now as to Frémont's private character, his tyranny, his arrogance, his exclusiveness, and others of like nature, as alleged against him. No man who ever travelled with him but knows their falsity. Frémont, more than any other man I ever knew, possessed the respect and affection of his men; he ever lived on terms of familiarity with them. Yet never did commander possess more complete control. He ever partook of the same fare; underwent like hardships; rode when they rode; walked when they walked; and unhesitatingly exposed himself to every danger and privation.

In his private character he is a model; singularly temperate and abstemious in his habits, he never uses spirituous liquors; profane language is a stranger to his lips; and I never recollect to have heard, during my long intercourse with him, anything like blasphemy issue from his lips. I never knew him to have any difficulties with his men; disturbances were a stranger to his camp. He had

¹ For Capt. Aram's anecdote, see *N. Y. Herald*, Oct. 1, 1856. For Alexander Godey's statement, see *N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 30, 1856.

a manner and a bearing toward his men which admitted of none of those petty altercations, or more serious occurrences, which are so common among parties beset with hardships and dangers, which are ever all-powerful to develop the most unfavorable features in the character of those composing them; and the truth of these things can be attested by all of the old companions of Frémont.

It was to Frémont's assiduity and skill that the expedition, when on its last legs, owed its final extrication. After one of his observations, apparently in Circle Valley, he told his associates that the Mormon hamlet, Parowan, forty rods square, was just over the mountains in the Little Salt Lake Valley, and that he would reach it in three days. The mountain ranges loomed tremendously ahead; the ascent was so steep and the snow so deep that the animals could hardly be got up; and at the top of the first peaks the prospect seemed hopeless. "When I surveyed the distance," says Carvalho, "I saw nothing but continued ranges of the everlasting snow, and for the first time my heart failed me."¹ But Frémont plunged confidently onward; he took out his pocket compass, and pointing in a certain direction, began the descent. It led through a seemingly incomprehensible maze of defiles, slopes, canyons, and valleys. Thus they went on; "and on the very day and hour previously indicated by Colonel Frémont, he conducted

¹ Carvalho, *Incidents*, 130.

us to the small settlement of Parowan, which could not be distinguished two miles off, thus proving himself a most correct astronomer and geometrician. Here was no chance work—no guessing—for a deviation of one mile, either way, from the true course, would have plunged the whole party into certain destruction.”

It was on February 8, 1854, that the four hundred people of Parowan welcomed Frémont's party, who had been for forty-eight hours without food of any kind. Every family took in one or several members. One man, and one only, the assistant engineer, Oliver Fuller, had died. Jessie and her family always believed that she had had a strange psychic revelation, precise as to the day and hour, of her husband's emergence from the jaws of death. Near the first of May, 1854, Frémont was in San Francisco, and there declined a public dinner because he was eager to hurry back to the Atlantic Coast. He was soon in New York again, publishing in the newspapers a long letter¹ setting forth the advantages of his new, easy, and central route to the Pacific—a route which was never used, though some of his information later proved of value to western railway builders; working in the studio of the photographer Brady to assist in finishing the daguerre plates taken by Carvalho; rejoicing to learn that his claim against the Government on the Indian contract had at last been allowed,² and more perplexed than ever over the “Mari-

¹ *Washington National Intelligencer*, June 13, 1854.

² *Congressional Globe*, July 29, 1854.

posa business." The Federal District Court early in the year had reversed the decision of the Federal land commissioners giving him title to the estate, and now the case was going to the Supreme Court. To help meet the costs of litigation, for his counsel included no less eminent a lawyer than John J. Crittenden, he took a step pregnant with trouble when he sold to the San Francisco banking house of Palmer, Cook and Company certain large claims on the property.

CHAPTER XXVII

NOMINATED FOR THE PRESIDENCY

WHILE Frémont had been watching the swinging couples at Versailles and making his last invasion of the unknown Rockies, the Republic had begun to move with quickening pace toward a catastrophe that men more and more clearly divined. Clay was in his grave at Lexington, and Webster had been laid by the sea at Marshfield. Americans by millions had hung over *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and by hundreds of thousands had vowed themselves abolitionists after seeing it on the stage. While the dwarfish Douglas clashed with the tall and angular Seward on the floor of the Senate, schoolboys were spouting Longfellow's anxious new lines—"Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!" The Kansas-Nebraska bill, repealing the Missouri Compromise, passed through Congress amid a storm of southern cheers and northern denunciation; and as Chase walked at dawn down the Capitol steps with the boom of Democratic cannon in his ears, he said to Sumner, "They celebrate a present victory, but the echoes they awake shall never rest until slavery itself shall die." The slave Burns, after an effort at rescue by a "mob" numbering some of the finest gentlemen of Massachusetts, had been marched to the Boston wharf by pla-

toons of troops through fifty thousand jeering and hissing people. In Missouri the animosity had risen so high that Benton, for his free-soil views, was retired from the Senate to the House; and just across the boundary in Kansas civil war was beginning to burst into flame.

The first ebullition of violence in Kansas sent a tremor of foreboding throughout the country. Five thousand unkempt and noisy Missourians, armed with revolvers, guns, and bowie knives, crowded over the boundary to vote in the spring elections of that territory in 1855. Benton was one of the men whom the growing crisis most alarmed. He had attacked the Kansas-Nebraska bill as a bungling attempt to smuggle slavery into the territory and throughout all the West up to the Canadian line. Now he was proclaiming on every occasion that the extension of slavery must be opposed by all constitutional means; but he also proclaimed that the Union must be saved from shock and danger. Losing even his seat in the House, he prepared to go on the lecture platform and arouse the North to its danger. He would be a new Peter the Hermit, he said, and if people called him mad, later they would admit that he had been inspired.¹ As the year 1855 proceeded and the explosives were piled higher in Kansas, other leaders of both parties showed the same dismay and solicitude.

The Frémonts in the spring of 1855 definitely gave

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

up the thought of residence in Washington. Jessie had been spending much time there, her mother steadily sinking. After Mrs. Benton's death, she still lingered, for her fourth baby was soon to be born. But suddenly the roomy Benton home was burned to the ground, the library, furniture, and papers, including the second volume of Benton's "Thirty Years' View," were lost, and Jessie suffered a severe shock. President Pierce, who embraced her and called her by her first name as in childhood days, asked her and her father to stay at the White House, but she felt through with the capital. "Before my baby was a month old, the bitterness of the coming strife invaded even my guarded room," she tells us. "I felt the ground-swell—I felt I was no longer in my place—it was certainly too hard on Mr. Frémont, and as soon as I could be moved, New York became our city of refuge."¹ For the summer of 1855, she went on to the sea air of Nantucket, at Siasconset.

Frémont had been oscillating between New York and Washington, looking after Mariposa business in both cities; and now there came from his own party, the Democrats, the first clear intimation that he might be nominated for the presidency. The precise form which this intimation took has been the subject of some dispute. According to his daughter Elizabeth, a cousin named William Preston of Kentucky, later minister to

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

Spain, was the chief emissary.¹ A writer in the *Detroit Tribune* for the following year gives a different story; he says that Frémont was about to sail for California in October, 1855, when ex-Governor John B. Floyd of Virginia called upon him to offer his assistance and that of other Democratic leaders in obtaining the nomination, and that in two interviews this offer took explicit form.² The really authoritative story is told in Frémont's own manuscript memoirs.

In Washington, Frémont had become acquainted with Edward Carrington, who was related to the Benton family and was a nephew of ex-Governor Floyd, and with him and other southerners had held many discussions upon politics. The Native American party was then taking its crooked course through political affairs, and Frémont felt inclined to indorse its exclusionist policy. Though he had no prejudice against any race, he believed that America would be happier and better governed if it ceased to admit a heterogeneous, unassimilable mass of foreigners. His views interested those southerners who hoped to bring about an alliance of the Native Americans with the Democrats; and with Floyd at their head, a group undertook to negotiate with him regarding a presidential nomina-

¹ Elizabeth B. Frémont, *Recollections*, 75.

² Quoted in *N. Y. Evening Post*, Sept. 4, 1856. Floyd had been Governor of Virginia in 1850-53, and was later appointed Secretary of War by Buchanan. Floyd's wife had been Sally B. Preston of Virginia, who was thus a relative of William Preston, and like him, a member of Mrs. Frémont's connection. It is certain that Floyd and William Preston acted together, and possible that the able and influential Ex-Senator William C. Preston of South Carolina was interested in the movement to nominate Frémont.



FRÉMONT IN 1856

(Photograph by Brady, engraved by Buttré.)

tion. They saw the necessity for selecting as Democratic leader a man of integrity and renown who was not connected with the horrible Kansas mess. Finally, a conference took place in the St. Nicholas Hotel, in New York, lasting several days, at which place, says Frémont, the southern agents offered him the Democratic nomination coupled with conditions of a stringent nature. Frémont took with him to the conference a man of precisely his own political tenets, Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts—a Democrat and a Free Soiler, who was sufficiently sympathetic with the Native Americans to have received their votes of Congress the previous year. Both Frémont and Banks objected vehemently when it was proposed that the former should indorse the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave law, and Banks denounced this legislation so heatedly that he broke up one conference. Jessie recalls that before Frémont gave his final “no,” he came to Siasconset to consult her:¹

One of them [the Democratic agents] said, “the Democratic party was sure to win, and no woman could refuse the Presidency.” After tea Mr. Frémont said if I could walk as far as he wished me to with him to the Lighthouse Hill he had something to say to me without interruption. And so there and then he told me of the offered nomination, and of the conditions attached.

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

There was no shadow of doubt in our minds. At the foot of the bluff on which the lighthouse stood were the remains embedded in the sands of a ship, the seas washing into her ribs. Above, steady and brilliant, flashed out the recurring light. "It is the choice between a wreck of dishonor, or a kindly light that will go on its mission of doing good. You cannot give in to the execution of *all* the laws. (The fugitive slave law was specified.)" And so his decision was made.

After the Democrats, the founders of the new Republican, or "People's," party turned to Frémont. Both Banks and his friend Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts were intensely interested in the organization of the new party, and they caught with enthusiasm at the suggestion that Frémont would make an ideal nominee. Palmer, of Palmer, Cook and Company, was in the city, and he advised the explorer to stay and await developments. As a consequence, instead of leaving for California in the fall, Frémont took up his residence at the Metropolitan Hotel.

During the winter, the movement to make the picturesque "Pathfinder" the Republican candidate gathered strength as fast as did the party itself. It was taken up by his old friend Francis P. Blair, the veteran Washington editor, and the young Frank P. Blair of St. Louis. Banks, who was the successful Republican candidate that winter for Speaker of the House, and Wil-

son, who had presided over the Free Soilers' convention in 1852, were assiduous propagandists. During February, 1856, Banks came to New York City and undertook to enlist the *Tribune* and the *Evening Post*, the leading Republican organs, for the candidate. Arguing that some one was needed to typify free-soil principles, and that the dashing, magnetic Frémont was the ideal chieftain, he took John Bigelow, the able assistant of William Cullen Bryant on the *Evening Post*, to call upon Frémont. Bigelow was favorably impressed, and at once assembled at his home a conference of free-soil leaders.¹ The members of this body included Francis P. Blair, Samuel J. Tilden, Edwin P. Morgan, who was later governor and senator, and Edward Miller. All of them save Tilden, who was destined to cling to the Democratic party, favored Frémont as nominee, and Blair promised to try to obtain Benton's indorsement of his son-in-law; while the *Evening Post* began to speak of the explorer in high terms.

Before spring was fairly begun, a strong current of Frémont sentiment was manifest among Republicans all over the North. It seemed to well up spontaneously, and was particularly vigorous in the West. The Cleveland *Herald* came out for Frémont at the end of March. "Frémont is very popular in Ohio," wrote the Cleveland correspondent of the *New York Tribune* on April 3. The *Herald of Freedom*, the organ of the Emigrant Aid Society, had published a laudatory article upon

¹ Allan Nevins, *The Evening Post*, 251.

the explorer in January, and at the beginning of April placed his name at its masthead: "OUR CANDIDATE: *John C. Frémont*." The whole Kansas free-soil element in the North was impressed by an anti-slavery letter which Frémont had just written to "Gov." Charles Robinson of Kansas.¹

Though the East was cooler toward him than the Northwest, the argument of Frémont's "availability" was rapidly coming to be considered irresistible. Most New York and New England Republicans would have preferred Seward, Chase, or some other leader who, as Bryant wrote, bore the scars of long warfare against slavery.² But the evident fact was that none of the veterans could win. Chase and Seward had taken too extreme a stand upon the slavery question, being committed to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and to the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act. Moreover, both, and especially Seward, were highly distasteful to the Native Americans, while the old-line Whigs heartily disliked them. As a third possibility, there was a justice of the Federal Supreme Court, John McLean of Ohio. He was the favorite of Pennsylvania, and had many adherents in New Jersey, and in Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln supported him. But he was an aged man, now past seventy, and an uninspiring, colorless figure. Dana of the *Tribune* wrote that he was "an old foggy," "a marrowless old lawyer," and the

¹ Cf. *The Liberator*, April 8, 1856.

² *N. Y. Evening Post*, June 19, 1856.

younger, aggressive element among the Republicans turned away from him.¹ To this element, as to the more calculating politicians, Frémont seemed by far the most suitable candidate. He was young, just forty-three; a romantic aura hung about his name; and he was an active, daring, gallant figure, just the leader to typify a young and crusading party.

During May, the situation crystallized to a point at which it became evident that the real choice had narrowed down to Frémont or McLean, and that the former was almost certain to win the prize. Seward was definitely out of the race. He had made it clear that he was not a candidate. In this, he was acting under the influence of Thurlow Weed, who believed that he could not be elected and should wait till 1860 for his chance. Chase was unacceptable, for it was now plain that the cry of Abolitionism would cost him tens of thousands of votes in southern Illinois and Indiana. McLean's strength was rapidly ebbing. Samuel Bowles wrote that the Frémont movement in the West was going "like a prairie fire." Greeley was noncommittal, but he was arguing that the paramount consideration was the ability to draw votes, and this meant Frémont. The Chicago correspondent of the *New York Tribune* declared that Frémont was more frequently spoken of in Illinois than any other man.² "A sort of intrusive feeling pervades the people that he will be nominated

¹ J. S. Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War*, 338.

² *N. Y. Tribune*, May 5, 1856.

and elected. The same sentiment is extending over Iowa and spreading into Wisconsin. He seems to combine more elements of strength than any man who has yet been named."

When the Native American Convention met in New York during the second week of June, the prospect seemed excellent that it would accept the invitation of the Republican National Committee to join hands with the new party, and would declare for the most prominent of the Republican candidates. Frémont believed that it was ready to nominate him. In this conviction, he wrote a letter to one of the convention managers, Governor Ford, which was a really notable expression of political independence. He took a firm stand against all racial or national prejudice:¹

The people throughout the free States [wrote Frémont], with extraordinary unanimity and enthusiasm, appear to be rising in a simultaneous effort upon a single and great issue, regardless of the minor questions of party policy which in quieter times have sundered the north and nullified its power. On all sides there is a generous disposition to rise above all political animosities and all prejudices of birth and religion. With the feelings which are actuating the body of the people at this moment I take pleasure in saying that I am thoroughly imbued. I am hostile to slavery upon principle and feeling. While I feel myself inflexible

¹ *Bigelow MSS.*, N. Y. Public Library.

in the belief that it ought not to be interfered with where it exists under the shield of state sovereignty, I am as inflexibly opposed to its extension on this continent beyond its present limits. Animated with these views, confident of their success, and earnestly disposed to do battle persistently in their behalf, and having but little active sympathy with secondary questions, which are not involved in the great issue, I am naturally identified with the cause represented by the great Republican Convention about to assemble in Philadelphia. I could not therefore accept unconditionally the candidateship of the American party, inasmuch as I would feel bound by the decisions of that party with which I am identified.

It was just as well that, acting upon the advice of his political managers, Frank P. Blair, Isaac Sherman, and others, Frémont held this letter out of the mail. A majority of the Native American party nominated N. P. Banks and William F. Johnston of North Carolina, and took action looking toward a fusion with the Republicans upon this basis. Thereupon a rump body representing eight important states seceded, and nominated Commodore Stockton of New Jersey and Kenneth Raynor of North Carolina.

The first Republican National Convention, nearly a thousand strong, met in the Musical Fund Hall of Philadelphia, the largest auditorium of the city, at

eleven o'clock on the morning of June 17, 1856. Several characteristics were strongly stamped upon it. It was a sectional gathering; only four slave states were represented, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky, and they sent but a handful of border-region members. All the free states and the territories of Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota had sent delegates. It was also a gathering in which the evangelical element—there were many loud-talking ministers present—and the radical antislavery element, with men like Wilmot, Lovejoy, and Giddings, were prominent. From the outset, a camp-meeting fervor, an intense crusading enthusiasm such as was hardly known again in American politics till the Progressive Convention of 1912 in Chicago, marked the proceedings. A great movement for free men, free speech, and free thought was being launched. The exalted spirit of the assemblage, its moral elevation, and its decorum, contrasted strongly with the rowdy barroom atmosphere of the Democratic Convention which had just named Buchanan at Cincinnati.

One name, and almost one alone, was in the air—Frémont. Before the doors swung open, J. S. Pike wrote the *Tribune* that two days of investigation had satisfied him that Frémont's nomination was inevitable. The New York delegation, ruled by Thurlow Weed, was, he said, almost unanimously for the Pathfinder; the majority of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey delegations were for McLean; Ohio's delegation was di-

vided, some for Frémont, some for McLean, and most for Chase; a majority of the Illinois members were at least nominally for McLean; and the remainder of the country had generally chosen Frémont delegates. "The fact is not disguised," Pike concluded, "that as a general thing the outright, progressive-movement men are in favor of Frémont, while McLean is the candidate for the slow and hunkerish part of the convention. The general sentiment of all is conciliatory."¹ But the "progressive" men were obviously in control, applauding every radical utterance and distributing such inflammatory literature as the House Committee Report on the assault of Brooks upon Sumner.

The first important task was the platform. Edward Morgan, who had been at Bigelow's conference, called the convention to order, and Robert Emmet of New York was temporary chairman. With eighty-odd reporters scribbling like mad before him, and the delegates wild with enthusiasm, David Wilmot on the second morning read the platform. It was a brief document of nine "resolutions," which it did not take ten minutes to recite. Each separate plank rang out like the report of a cannon and was followed by a salvo of applause. The denunciation of the Kansas atrocities was the signal for a tremendous demonstration. The band played and cheer on cheer rang out as Wilmot declaimed that: "It is our fixed purpose to bring the perpetrators of these atrocious outrages, and their accomplices, to a

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, June 17, 1856.

sure and condign punishment hereafter." The platform upheld the Missouri Compromise, opposed the extension of slavery, demanded the admission of Kansas as a free state, denied the power of Congress or any local legislature to establish slavery within a territory, and declared that the Ostend Circular was "the highwayman's plea that 'might makes right.'" Mormon polygamy and southern slavery were linked together as "twin relics of barbarism."¹

On the third day came the balloting. Ex-Governor Patterson of New Jersey formally withdrew the name of Seward; he was followed by Judge Spaulding of Ohio, who by authority withdrew the name of McLean; and Thomas J. Mitchell of Ohio, in the same way, withdrew the name of Chase. The Convention, tense with excitement, expected Frémont's nomination to follow at once. Frank P. Blair, who was present and who had in his pocket a letter from Frémont authorizing him to do anything except permit the explorer to be named for vice-president,² felt that victory was within his grasp. At this moment, Thaddeus Stevens rose and begged for delay. One man only, he said, could carry Pennsylvania; that man, Justice McLean, had been withdrawn; and it was necessary for the delegates from his state to consult on the changed situation. All the previous day Stevens, Wilmot, and other McLean men had done their best to make converts from the Frémont

¹ Charles W. Johnson, *First Three Republican National Conventions*, 35 ff.

² *Bigelow MSS*

ranks, and had succeeded in winning over a number of Maine delegates. Now, during the recess, Stevens made a despairing and passionate appeal to the Pennsylvania delegation to stand fast for McLean. If Frémont were nominated, he told them, the Republicans would lose, not only Pennsylvania, but the whole election.¹

Stevens's effort was all in vain, though immediately after the Convention reopened the name of Justice McLean was again put in nomination. An informal ballot was taken, and showed that Frémont had 359 votes, McLean 196, Sumner 2, and Seward 1. David Wilmot then took the floor and made a plea for unanimity, after which the formal ballot was taken, and all but 38 of the votes were found to be for Frémont. The scene was one of intense enthusiasm. The band blared forth, the floor and galleries were a sea of tossing hats and waving handkerchiefs, and as an American flag bearing Frémont's name was raised from the platform, and a broad pennant inscribed "John C. Frémont for President" was drawn across the full width of the hall, the cheering became deafening. Banners were flung from the windows, and the applause of the crowds in the streets mingled with that in the hall.² "The enthusiasm is tremendous," Greeley wired his office while the demonstration still continued.

Then followed what Frémont always considered the great error of the Convention—the nomination of W.

¹ E. B. Washburne, *The Edwards Papers*, 246.

² *N. Y. Tribune*, *N. Y. Evening Post*, June 19, 1856.

L. Dayton for Vice-President. He had no personal objection to the man, but he believed that Simon Cameron should have been named instead. In this way, a stronger fight could have been waged against Buchanan in Pennsylvania. Cameron would perhaps have had the nomination had not Francis P. Blair, whose antagonisms were always intense, sternly vetoed the suggestion.¹

The Republican press of the North rallied to Frémont with unaffected liking and hope. Few of the editors knew much about him, but all that they did know was highly favorable. The *Tribune* declared that "having exhibited a singular force of character and a distinguished ability in every undertaking to which he applied himself," he had now been called to the difficult but glorious enterprise "of rescuing the government and the Union from the hands of a body of unprincipled politicians." Bryant asked what was the secret of his overwhelming popularity. "The times require in the chief magistrates of the nation an unshaken courage, perfect steadiness of purpose, and a ready command of resources. The times require a man who has something heroic in his character"; and the people believed that the Frémont who had surmounted western perils so admirably possessed these qualities. Raymond in the *Times* declared that the citizens could not fail to elect him if they had "any admiration for high personal qualities, for perseverance, bravery, disinterested benev-

¹ MS. *Memoirs*.



CO. FREMONT'S LAST GRAND EXPLORING EXPEDITION IN 1856.

FREMONT RIDING THE "ABOLITION NAG" TO SALT RIVER IN 1856

(From the Print Collection, New York Public Library. Seward leads the nag, which bears the features of Greeley, while Beecher follows loaded down with Sharp's rifles, and a frontiersman comments caustically on Fremont's sad plight.)

olence, generosity, heroism, for noble-mindedness, high attainments, and devotion to duty." The Frémont Legend was approaching its zenith. Republican writers and orators at once began to magnify the Pathfinder into a heroic figure of grand proportions, a combination of Lochinvar, Deerslayer, and William Pitt; some newspapers even instituted a comparison between his achievements in his first forty years and the lesser deeds of George Washington.

Frémont, now living in a pleasant house at 56 Ninth Street, accepted his nomination calmly. He had not felt certain of receiving the honor, and had written Frank Blair several days earlier without excitement. His sensations, he said,¹ were

as if there had been hereabouts a preliminary shock of an earthquake, and I feel as men do, I suppose, who are momentarily expecting the great shock. But my nerves seem to preserve their usual tranquillity, and I am well satisfied with myself. From the anxious inquiries of friends for some days past it seems to have been expected that I should be ill, but I continue in rather better than ordinary health, which it will please you to know.

At once, friends crowded to congratulate him; he was overwhelmed with the usual mass of telegrams and letters; and, on June 25, there was a great ratification meeting at the Tabernacle, with bands, speeches

¹ *Bigelow MSS.*

by Robert Emmett, Lyman Trumbull, and others, and an enthusiastic torchlight procession afterward up Broadway to the Colonel's home. Frémont spoke a few words, and Jessie was called forth to acknowledge a round of cheers. A fortnight later, on July 9, there was published Frémont's formal acceptance of the nomination. One passage in his short speech, in which he declared against any filibustering expeditions or aggressions upon the domain of other nations, attracted especial attention abroad, and was warmly commended by the *London Times*. But the American public was interested chiefly in his remarks upon the slavery question. He aligned himself with the explicit declarations of the Republican platform:

Nothing is clearer in the history of our institutions than the design of the nation, in asserting its own independence and freedom, to avoid giving countenance to the extension of slavery. The influence of the small but compact and powerful class of men interested in slavery, who command one section of the country and wield a vast political control as a consequence in the other, is now directed to turn back the impulse of the Revolution and reverse its principles. The extension of slavery across the continent is the object of the power which now rules the government; and from this spirit have sprung those kindred wrongs of Kansas so truly portrayed in one of your resolutions,

which prove that the elements of the most arbitrary governments have not been vanquished by the just theory of our own.

It would be out of place here to pledge myself to any particular policy that has been suggested to determine the sectional controversy engendered by political animosities, operating on a powerful class banded together by common interest. A practical remedy is the admission of Kansas into the Union as a free state. The South should, in my judgment, earnestly desire such a consummation. It would vindicate its good faith. It would correct the mistake of the repeal; and the North, having practically the benefit of the agreement between the two sections, would be satisfied and good feeling be restored.

With this acceptance—the first and last public utterance of any note by Frémont in the campaign—the battle of 1856 was fully opened.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1856

ELEVATED thus suddenly to one of the most conspicuous political pedestals in the country, named by a powerful party as its leader in a great moral crusade, Frémont might have been pardoned some show of personal pride, some *gaucherie*, at least some tactical misstep. Fifteen years before he had been an obscure, impoverished army lieutenant, without resources or prospects. Now he was rich, petted, a national hero, his name written large on the Golden West, the reputed conqueror of California, the dashing young marshal of a gallant cause. It illustrates his inborn modesty and sense of fitness that his conduct was exemplary. Frémont had his faults, but lack of taste was never among them. The critical Gideon Welles, in a severe passage written some years after, did him the justice to remember that at this time his public aspect was winning. "His bearing was very well so far as he appeared before the public. I saw that he was anxious to be elected but not offensively so; he was not obtrusive, but, on the contrary, reserved and retiring."¹ His self-management was the more creditable in that his advisers included some highly untrustworthy men, who inspired the dislike not only of Welles but of Blair and Bigelow.

¹ Gideon Welles, *Diary*, II, 41.

From the beginning of the campaign, Frémont and the other leaders had hope of victory, and these hopes rapidly mounted as news of an increasing free-soil fervor came in from all parts of the North and West. The strategic elements of the situation were, as Greeley had insisted, simple. The Republicans were certain of 114 electoral votes—those of the New England States, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. The Democrats were certain of 108 electoral votes from the South and the border states. The doubtful factors were Pennsylvania with 27 electoral votes; Indiana with 13; Illinois with 11; Maryland with 8; New Jersey with 7, and California with 4. That is, there were 70 doubtful votes. Since 149 were sufficient to elect, the Republicans needed only to carry Pennsylvania and Indiana, or Pennsylvania and Illinois, to be victorious. Was this impossible? The best judges thought not.

There were three main tickets in the field: Buchanan and Breckinridge for the Democrats, Frémont and Dayton for the Republicans, and Millard Fillmore and Donelson for the expiring Whig party. The great danger, of course, was that Fillmore would draw just enough votes from Frémont to defeat him; but, as the canvass proceeded, the exuberance and energy of the Republican organization surprised even its members.

Throughout the North, indeed, the Republican campaign awakened a fervency and uproar recalling the log-cabin campaign of 1840, but possessing a moral

policy and a program of statesmanship which the Harrison campaign had lacked. One mass meeting, with torchlight processions, red fire, and marching bands, followed another. The nomination was immediately "ratified" by a series of gatherings all over the country. Then came a series of tremendous "rallies." Judge Hoar and Hannibal Hamlin spoke in Faneuil Hall. Bryant, Franz Sigel, Friedrich Kapp, and Charles A. Dana were heard in the Tabernacle in New York. No basic organization was needed in the North besides that supplied by the existing backbone of Emigrant Aid Societies and other agencies for the relief of Kansas, which had already reached into every country and almost every township. The gatherings seemed to spring spontaneously from some pent-up popular feeling. There was a Frémont demonstration of 25,000 people at Massilon, Ohio; another of 30,000 at Kalamazoo; and a third of equal size at Beloit, Wisconsin, where the crowds cheered a procession six miles in length. Illinois was not behind her neighbors. Lincoln spoke to 10,000 at Princeton, and at Alton addressed an enormous concourse—some said 35,000 people—brought together by the State Fair; while, at Jacksonville, Lyman Trumbull reviewed a procession a mile and a quarter long. The enthusiasm spread from Maine to Kansas; but it was the tremendous Frémont rally in Indianapolis in July which attracted the most attention.

Here, while the cannon roared all day, the procession



JAMES BUCHANAN: DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE IN 1856
(Born 1791; Secretary of State, 1845-1849; President, 1857-1861; died, 1868.)

took hours to pass a given point; a single delegation numbered almost 4,500 men; fifty bands were in line playing; twenty-five marshals kept the ranks in order; uncounted gay floats rolled down the streets, one of them carrying thirty-two young ladies in white, one for each state, with a thirty-third girl in black for bleeding Kansas; hundreds of banners and transparencies waved above the long line; and platoon after platoon of Germans, with their own flags, made up a special section of the pageant. At five different stands, orators took turns in exhorting the crowd to stand fast against slavery and polygamy, against border ruffians and Bully Brooks. That night a great torchlight procession turned the streets into streams of fire, above which rose the voices of haranguing orators.

The West and North were rallying against slavery with a new ardor. A silent but intense resentment had been aroused in the breasts of millions by the Kansas-Nebraska issue, and it was finding a sudden release in acclamation of Frémont and the Republican cause. Companies sprang up of young men carrying torches in vociferous night processions and calling themselves Wide Awakes. Fife and drum corps shrilled and rattled. Frémont glee clubs shook the village lyceum halls and opera houses. Long lines of gigs and wagons raised the dust on prairie roads, going to Frémont picnics and rallies. A powerful array of Republican campaign speakers was taking the stump. In the East, they included Speaker Banks, Chase, Greeley, Sumner, and

Senator Hale, while even the aloof Emerson and the retiring Bryant made speeches. William M. Evarts spoke with effect in New York. In the West, Schuyler Colfax of Indiana was active, Carl Schurz was busy addressing the Germans, and striplings like Whitelaw Reid were pressed into service. Lincoln, speaking ninety times in all, made at Belleville, Jacksonville, and other towns, some of the ablest addresses he had yet delivered. On every hand, newspapers which for years had been Whig or Democratic were turning to the new party.

Song and slogan and picture lent their aid in the campaign. Banners were raised across village streets, emblazoned with such devices as "We Follow the Pathfinder"; "We Shall Be Redeemed From the Rules of Nigger Drivers"; "We Are A Buck-Hunting"; or with a still bolder use of the pun, "Jessie Bent-on Being Free."¹ The Democrats were taunted as the Buchaneers. Frémont was pictured as a locomotive, running down a buck, which cried "The Union is in Danger"; and over the locomotive were the words, "The Pacific Railroad with No Provisos." One slogan was repeated everywhere, in the Republican newspapers, on Republican posters, and in Republican speeches: "Free Speech, Free Press, Free Soil, Free Men, Frémont and Victory." Jessie played only a slighter part in the campaign than her husband, and "Frémont and Jessie" seemed to constitute the Republican ticket rather than

¹ *N. Y. Evening Post*, Sept. 1, 1856.

Frémont and Dayton. "We go for our country and Union, and for brave little Jessie forever," ran one ditty. At a Philadelphia rally in June, there was distributed a campaign song, chanted to the tune of "Camptown Races," which made a hit and spread rapidly all over the North:

There's an old gray horse whose name is Buck;

Du da, du da,

His dam was Folly and his sire Bad Luck,

Du da, du da day.

Chorus.—We're bound to work all night,

We're bound to work all day,

I'll bet my money on the Mustang Colt,

Will anybody bet on the Gray?

The Mustang Colt is strong and young,

Du da, du da,

His wind is sound and his knees not sprung,

Du da, du da day.

The old gray horse when he tries to trot, Du da, du da,

Goes round and round in the same old spot, Du da, du da day.

The mustang goes a killing pace, Du da, du da,

He's bound to win in the four mile race, Du da, du da day.

The most powerful of the Northern newspapers supported Frémont. In New York, he had the loyal assistance of not only the *Tribune*, the *Evening Post*, and the *Times*, all possessing a national circulation, but also of James Gordon Bennett's *Herald*, which had long been Democratic, and which four years later was panic-stricken in its desire to let the South have its way. The

Philadelphia North American, edited by Morton McMichael, took the Republican side. So, of course, did the Chicago *Tribune* of Medill and Horace White. The German press of the nation had espoused Frémont's candidacy before the nomination was actually consummated, and did as valiant service as the German speakers, who included Philip Dorsheimer, Gustav Koerner, and Schurz. German songs were written, for one of which, by E. V. Scherb, the poet-editor Bryant paid a prize of \$100.¹

Hurrah! Bald tönt der Jubelschrei!
Kansas ist jetzt gerochen,
Die Knechtschaft ist gebrochen,
Frei ist Amerika!
Frémont der Siegeskräftige,
Er hat den Feind bezwungen,
Drum jauchzen alle Zungen;
Frémont! Victoria!

Lithographed portraits of Frémont, two feet wide and two and a half feet long, manufactured in New York and retailed at a dollar each, blazed forth in Republican shop windows and local headquarters. Two extended campaign biographies were prepared, one by John Bigelow, with the aid of Jessie Frémont, which Derby and Jackson of New York sold in huge quantities at a dollar, and one by Charles Wentworth Upham, published by Ticknor and Fields in Boston. The *Tribune* also issued an excellent pamphlet life by Greeley. All the larger newspapers made a special cam-

¹ *N. Y. Evening Post*, Sept. 12, 1856.

paign price to summer subscribers. John G. Whittier celebrated Frémont's achievements in his poem "The Pass of the Sierras," recalling the day when the explorer bade his men press on "and look from Winter's frozen throne on Summer's flowers and grass!" and urging him now to lead the nation into the promised land; while such minor poets as T. B. Read and the Cary sisters published verse by the ream. Above all, the fact should be emphasized that the women of the North enlisted under Frémont's banner as they had never before enlisted in politics, while most of the Protestant clergy of the section boldly used the pulpit to urge his election.

The Democrats were shrewd enough to take the offensive, and their tactics embraced two main sets of operations. Although the Republicans conducted an almost irreproachable canvass, making no attack upon the private character of Buchanan except to insinuate that a bachelor ought not to be President, the Democrats leveled the most scurrilous charges against Frémont. Their main accusation, made with ceaseless iteration for its effect upon the Know-Nothing vote, was that Frémont was secretly a Catholic. As "proofs," they declared that in his first Western expedition he had carved a cross upon Rock Independence; that he and Jessie Benton had been married by a Catholic priest; that he had sent a ward and relative, his niece Nina, to a Catholic school; and that his father was a French Catholic. The *New York Express* fortified these alle-

gations by a half-dozen absurd stories.¹ It said that Frémont had been seen crossing himself in the Catholic cathedral in Washington, that he had once told a West Point professor that he was a Catholic, and that over a hotel table he had avowed the doctrine of transubstantiation. John Bigelow and others had no difficulty in proving that Frémont was a good Episcopalian. A committee of Protestant clergymen of New York, including several professors at the Union Theological Seminary, called upon Frémont and received ample assurances of his Protestantism.²

Nevertheless, these charges did Frémont substantial harm. Schuyler Colfax wrote Bigelow at the end of August that of hundreds of letters from the Northwest, "scarcely any omits a reference to the fact that the Catholic story injures us materially, both in keeping men in the Fillmore ranks who ought to be with us, and in cooling many of our friends who fear from Colonel Frémont's silence and the cloud of rumors on the subject that there may be some truth in it."³ He added that unfortunately they made nothing on the other side, the Catholics being solidly against the Republicans. So they were, chiefly because they believed the Know Nothings to be behind Frémont; of nearly forty Catholic journals, not one in July was found on the Republican side.⁴

¹ *N. Y. Express* files, July, 1856.

² *Bigelow MSS.*; see also the pamphlet, *Col. Frémont's Religion*.

³ *Bigelow MSS.*, Aug. 29, 1856.

⁴ *N. Y. Tribune*, July 21, 1856.



MILLARD FILLMORE: NATIVE AMERICAN NOMINEE, 1856
(Born 1800; elected Vice-President, 1848; President, 1850-52; died 1872.)

At the height of the campaign, some forty Republican leaders, meeting in a conference at the Astor House, discussed the charge with Frémont, and Thurlow Weed declared that he ought to make a public disavowal. This the candidate declined to do. He took the position that the main issue of the campaign was freedom, intellectual as well as physical, that under the Constitution no religious belief disqualified a man for office, and that he would not ask for a single vote if in so doing he had to appeal to the religious fanaticism which had long cursed certain nations of Europe. After the conference, he decided to consult James Gordon Bennett. "What are your convictions?" asked the editor, and Frémont told him. "Follow those convictions, Colonel, and I will sustain you," was the reply.

A multitude of other charges, many of them silly, were brought against the explorer. He was the most abstemious of men, yet he was accused of being a hard drinker. It was said that he had owned seventy-five slaves, whom he had hired out to Colonel Brant of St. Louis. The fact was, of course, that both Frémont and Jessie had again and again declined to accept a single slave from their southern relatives, though often pressed to do so during their privations on the frontier; for both had an unconquerable aversion to slavery. The Democratic press made much of Frémont's financial perplexities. He had signed a note for \$1,891, it said, due in a year, and when the brokers refused to discount it, had offered it to Horace Greeley at 2 per cent a

month. Greeley angrily rejoined that in the first place he was not a note-shaver, and in the second everybody knew he did not have \$1,891!¹ Stories were printed that Frémont was ineligible to the presidency, having been born abroad, and a man came forward who recalled the very house in Montreal in which he had first seen the light! Naturally, and most painfully of all to Frémont's friends, the Democrats seized eagerly upon the circumstances of his parentage, upon the whole dark story of his mother and her Anna Karenina-love for a man of her own age, and magnified its unpleasant aspect.

Much more effective were the attacks directed against Frémont's military and financial transactions in California. During the previous session of Congress, a foundation for these assaults had been laid by Senator Thompson of New Jersey and Senator Bigler of Pennsylvania, who in bitterly partisan speeches raked over all Frémont's campaigns and California contracts. At the same time, the *Los Angeles Star* charged the explorer with great cruelty and rapacity in his treatment of the native Californians during and after the Bear Flag War. So far as his share in the American acquisition of the Coast went, the Republicans had a sweepingly effective answer ready. They simply quoted the testimony of Buchanan himself, in the British judicial inquiry into the suits against Frémont in 1852, that "his services were very valuable; he bore a conspicuous part

¹ Cf. *N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 13, 1856.

in the conquest of California, and in my opinion is better entitled to be called the conqueror of California than any other man." The answer to the charges of cruelty was equally decisive. At Los Angeles and San José, large numbers of native Californians, led by Don Pio Pico, signed statements denying them completely and appealing for the election of Frémont.¹

Nevertheless, in California especially, the history of Frémont's share in the Indian beef contract and his connection with "the political swindling house of Palmer, Cook and Company," was so retold as to cost the explorer heavily. Actually, he had performed a public service in forestalling a threatened Indian war. But his handling of the contract, his protracted siege of Congress to obtain payment, and his negotiations with his creditors, were all interpreted in hostile manner. The *San Francisco Globe*, in a long and venomous article, reviewed these business affairs and also accused Frémont of complicity with Palmer, Cook and Company in trying to swindle the public in exploiting the Mariposa mines.² This article was an adroit tissue of lies. Frémont and his friends did everything in their power to dissociate his name from that of the discredited banking firm, making it clear that he had never been a partner or associate. But many Republicans on the Pacific Coast feared that there was some basis of truth for the reports.

¹ *N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 29, 1856.

² *Morning Globe*, Aug. 19, 1856.

Dozens of "Bear Clubs" and similar organizations were founded in California to support Frémont—sixteen in San Francisco alone; six or seven newspapers vigorously defended him. Nevertheless, a good deal of the mud stuck. The *San Francisco Bulletin*, edited by Thomas S. King, was friendly toward the Republican nominee. But it declared its firm conviction that "this disreputable firm has lost thousands of votes for Frémont in this State," and that it had injured him more than any other factor.¹

The second main element in the Democratic strategy lay in a systematic use of the threat of secession as a consequence of Frémont's election. The Black Republicans, said the Buchanan men, the party of "free soilers, Frémonters, free niggers, and freebooters," were the first sectional party in our history. Buchanan, himself, in his letter of acceptance, recalled the warning of Washington against the formation of political organizations upon geographical lines.² The Democratic platform repudiated "all sectional parties and platforms concerning domestic slavery," saying that they must eventuate in civil war and disunion. A multitude of shrewd and patriotic men who disliked slavery as much as Frémont himself instantly took this same point of view. One was Thomas Hart Benton, who with his usual high devotion to his principles uncompromisingly opposed his son-in-law, and published an open letter

¹ *Bulletin*, Nov. 5, Dec. 2, 1856.

² Horton, *Buchanan*, 414.

attacking the proposal of a Frémont ticket in Missouri; the whole Republican movement, he said, was accentuating the hostility between the two sections.¹ Denouncing any political party which tried to elect candidates from one part of the Union to rule over the whole of it, he asked if the people believed that the South would submit to such a President as Frémont? "We are treading," he said, "upon a volcano that is liable at any moment to burst forth and overwhelm the nation."²

To these same apprehensions, the *Washington Union*, the *Richmond Enquirer*, and the *Charleston Mercury* appealed by predicting disunion, if Frémont were elected, in the most emphatic terms. John Forsyth of Alabama, the new minister to Mexico, wrote that "the South ought not submit to it, and will not submit. The government of the United States will be at an end." Preston Brooks, the assailant of Sumner, fierily addressed a great mass meeting at Ninety-Six, South Carolina. "I believe the only hope of the South," he said, "is in dissolving the bonds which connect us with the government—in separating the living body from the dead carcass." If Frémont were actually chosen, he added, the news should be the signal for an instant Southern march upon Washington, for it would be a patriotic duty to "lay the strong arm of Southern free-men upon the treasury and archives of the government."³ Senator Slidell asserted that if the Republi-

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, Aug. 18, 1856.

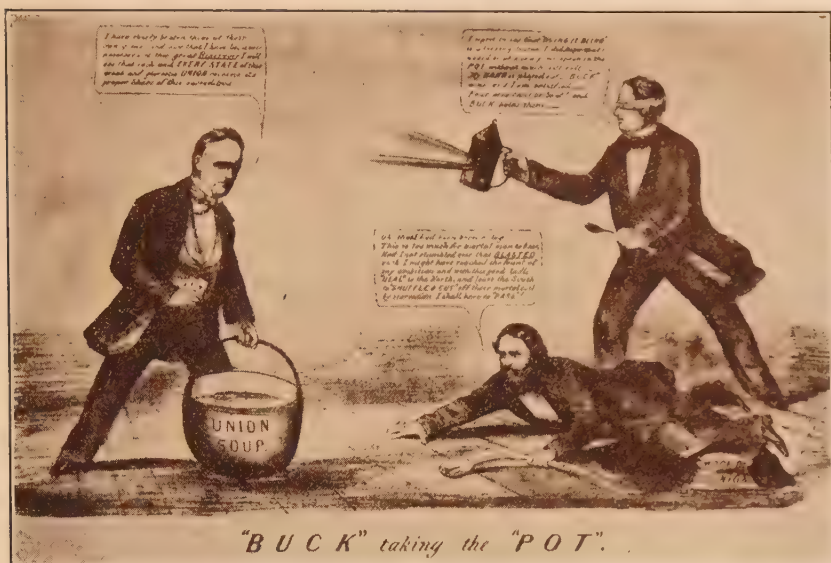
² *N. Y. Tribune*, July 2, 1856.

³ *N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 9, 1856.

cans triumphed, "the Union cannot and ought not to be preserved." Senator Mason declared that only one course would be open—"immediate, absolute, eternal separation." The editor of the Charleston *Mercury* believed that such an event "will be and ought to be the knell of the Union." When John Minor Botts defended the idea of an indissoluble Union, the *Richmond Enquirer* called him a traitor and threatened him with lynching.

While many Republican newspapers and speakers affected to scoff at these secessionist utterances, they awakened a profound dread among the more conservative Northerners. Bryant's *Evening Post* felt it necessary to publish long editorials assuring the nation that Frémont was not a radical, and that he would not countenance Sumner in his denunciation of the South, nor Seward in his insistence upon a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act. An impressive list of public figures among the Northern Whigs were so affected by the Southern threats that they aligned themselves with Buchanan, and appealed to the voters to take the same position. Thus Rufus Choate, in a long public letter, well reasoned and well written, declared that it was the first duty of the Whigs "to defeat and dissolve the new geographical party," and said that in these circumstances he would vote for Buchanan.¹ Webster's son, Fletcher Webster, violently assailed the new party, and so did James B. Clay, the son of Henry Clay. Such

¹ Samuel Gilman Brown, *Life of Rufus Choate*, 321; *N. Y. Times*, Aug. 15, 1856.



"BUCK" taking the "POT".



THE GREAT AMERICAN BUCK HUNT OF 1856.

TWO POLITICAL CARTOONS OF 1856

(The top cartoon shows Frémont stumbling over the Rock of Disunion, with Fillmore in the background, while Buchanan exclaims: "I have fairly beaten them at their own game; and now that I have become possessed of this great Reservoir, I will see that each and every State of the glorious Union receives a proper share of this sacred food." The second shows Frémont's "Sectional gun" exploding, Beecher and Greeley aghast, and Fillmore rejoicing that "my American rifle will bring down that old Buck" [Buchanan].)

other old-line Whigs as Caleb Cushing, Robert Winthrop, and Amos A. Lawrence, all of Massachusetts and all influential, took their stand by Choate to "prevent the madness of the times from working its maddest act." On the other hand, Wendell Phillips boldly gloried in the sectional nature of the new party, and asked why the North had never before dared to assert its sectional convictions.

It was one of the paradoxes of the campaign that while the South was thus fulminating against the "Black Republicans" for their hostility to slavery, the Abolitionists were assailing them for their tolerance of the institution. William Lloyd Garrison abused the Republican organization as feeble and indefinite, and sneered at the leaders for reassuring men of moderate views in order to poll a large vote at the election.¹ An abolitionist ticket was placed in the field, with Gerrit Smith as its candidate, and its special mouthpiece, the *Radical Abolitionist*, attacked Frémont in every issue as a leader who would compromise with a great evil.

As the campaign drew toward its close, Frémont continued to play, as was then expected of Presidential candidates, a rôle of dignified aloofness. He greeted the curious and for the most part friendly crowds of people who came to his Ninth Street home; he made brief and perfunctory speeches to various delegations; and he carried on a wide correspondence. He maintained his health by fencing every morning, and taking long walks

¹ W. P. and F. J. Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison*, IV, 442, 443.

after dark, while in the middle of October he took a brief run into Vermont.¹ The actual management of the campaign was in the hands of Francis P. Blair, John Bigelow, Isaac Sherman (who took New York for his special province), a Colonel James, and Thurlow Weed, men in whom both Frémont and Jessie had full confidence. Bigelow, James, and Sherman made up the private committee which, together with Mrs. Frémont, handled the mail.

The most painful aspect of the campaign was the growing intensity of the personal and sectional animosity which accompanied it. A typical illustration of the vituperation which southern speakers of the Rhett and Brooks type poured forth is furnished by a speech of Henry A. Wise in Richmond, a speech which represents scores of others:

Frémont is nothing. (Cheers). He is less than nothing in my estimation. (Enthusiastic cheering). He is but a mere personification of Black Republicanism, the bearer of the black flag. (Cheers). The question will not be, shall Frémont reign over you and me? but it will be, shall the black flag be erected, shall the higher law be executed by the President of the United States over the reign of the Constitution and the laws? Shall property be invaded with impunity? Yes, you will find hundreds that will say—they begin al-

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

ready to say—"O, wait, wait for some overt act!—wait for him to do some wrong!" Tell me, will any person entertaining feelings of self-respect, having the spirit and courage of a man, wait to prepare for war while its cloud is on the horizon until after the declaration of war is made?

Tell me, if the hoisting of the Black Republican flag in the hands of an adventurer, born illegitimately in a neighboring State, if not ill-begotten in this very city—tell me, if the hoisting of the black flag over you by a Frenchman's bastard, while the arms of civil war are already clashing, is not to be deemed an overt act and declaration of war?

Friend after friend, relative after relative, of Frémont's and of Mrs. Frémont's in the South now renounced them forever. From a one-time comrade, later a distinguished historian and soldier, with whom Frémont had grown up in Charleston, and for whom he had named a stream in the Far West, he received a note in explanation of the unauthorized publication of a private letter—a note which ended thus:¹

Mrs. Johnson and myself keenly feel the gross outrage committed upon us, by this most unwarranted reference to our private correspondence. After your course in reference to the Presidential election, any correspondence with you is painful to me, and nothing but the necessity of vindicating

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

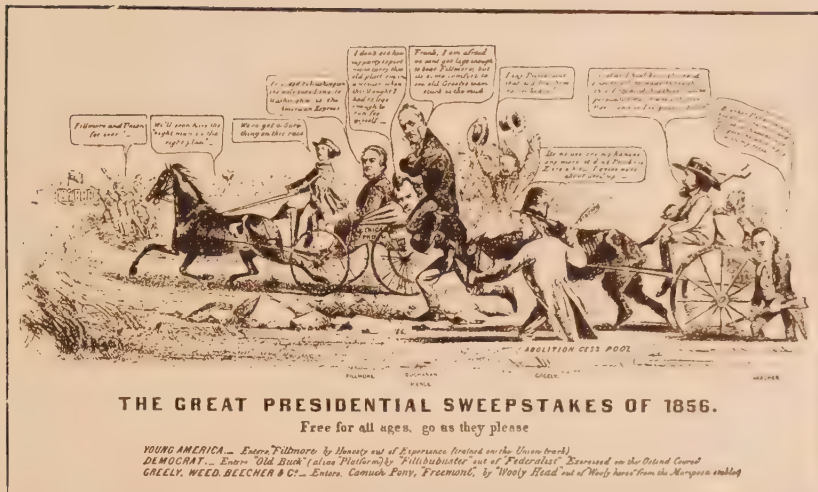
myself and family from a suspicion of such gross indelicacy as is implied in that reference, could have induced me again to address you.

Your obedient servant,

Edward McCrady.

But the chief compensating feature of the campaign was the enthusiasm with which the youth, the womanhood, the clergy, the cultural and intellectual leaders of the North, united in what seemed to them a great moral crusade. The universities, with such spokesmen as Felton of Harvard and Silliman of Yale, were almost unanimously for Frémont. The literary leaders of New England and New York had actively espoused his candidacy—Emerson, Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, Bayard Taylor, and even the venerable Washington Irving. One of George W. Curtis's campaign utterances, a felicitous address delivered to the students of Wesleyan University in Connecticut, at once became a classic of American politics—"The Duty of the American Scholar." The religious press was rallying and led by Henry Ward Beecher, whose pen in the pages of the *Independent* was only less effective than Greeley's in the *Tribune*. On the Sunday preceding the election, most of the New England ministers preached and prayed for the defeat of Buchanan, and from the pulpits of the Middle West were poured forth a thousand pleas for the Republican cause.

The crucial event preliminary to the presidential elec-



From a contemporary cartoon published by Currier & Ives, New York. In possession of the publishers



From a contemporary Democratic cartoon published by Currier & Ives, New York, in the New York Historical Society

TWO CARTOONS OF 1856

(The upper cartoon shows Fillmore distancing Buchanan, who rides on Franklin K. Pierce's shoulders, while Frémont, escorted by Greeley and Beecher, is stuck in the mud. The lower cartoon shows Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, and Henry J. Raymond on Frémont's "Woolly Horse," with J. Watson Webb of the *Courier and Enquirer* clinging behind.)

tion itself was the state election of October 14 in Pennsylvania, which was universally expected to show how the twenty-seven electoral votes of the Keystone State would be cast. Both sides girded up their loins. There were only two state parties, one of the Democratic; and the other the Union, which supposedly comprised the Republicans, Whigs, and Native Americans. At the beginning of the battle, all the strategists had pointed to Pennsylvania as the crucial ground, and had urged that money be poured into it. Unfortunately, the Republicans were straitened for funds, while their state organization was weak and defective. It was said later that the Democrats had spent nearly a half million dollars in Pennsylvania, and it is certain that John W. Forney and his assistants came to New York, demanded large sums from merchants interested in the southern trade, and took the funds back to subsidize, not merely the Democratic, but also the Native American, party.¹ August Belmont was reported to have given \$50,000, and other Wall Street bankers and brokers \$100,000 more. The Republicans loudly lamented their poverty. "When Frémont was nominated," Russell Erret wrote reproachfully from Pittsburgh to Salmon P. Chase, "our friends in New York, and Ohio, and everywhere, assured us that we could and should have whatever aid we needed, both in money and speakers, to carry the State; yet, so far . . . we have failed to get either."²

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² C. B. Going, *David Wilmot, Free-Soiler*, 493.

"We Frémonters of this town," Greeley wrote from New York, "have not one dollar where the Fillmoreans and Buchaneers have ten each, and we have Pennsylvania and New Jersey both on our shoulders. Each State is utterly miserable, so far as money is concerned."¹

The Republicans placed a small brigade of speakers in the field in the closing days of the fight, Charles A. Dana writing jubilantly, "I suppose there are about two hundred orators, great and small, now stumping Pennsylvania for Frémont"; but they included few men of national renown. The ablest campaigners were Robert Collyer, the great-hearted Yorkshire workingman and minister, whose rugged, simple eloquence went straight to the hearts of the laborers,² David Wilmot, and Hannibal Hamlin. State affection for Buchanan, as a favorite son, counted for a great deal; the Republican press, outside of Philadelphia, counted for little. Perhaps the decisive factor was the fear of the conservative, slow-minded, peace-loving "Pennsylvania Dutch" that Frémont's election would produce a costly upheaval, and their consequent decision to cling to the older parties.

Election day in Pennsylvania dawned with party feeling so intense that sober men were glad to find the weather raw and drizzling, for they had feared a clash of turbulent crowds. The streets of Philadelphia

¹ J. S. Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War*, 346.

² Cf. Moncure D. Conway, *Autobiography*, I, 238.

that night were jammed with people eager to hear the news. Two days elapsed before it was certain that the Buchanan state ticket was elected, and a still longer period before it was known that its majority fell short of 3,000. A change of 1,500 votes would have given Frémont's Union party the victory. Yet this close result was decisive; it was at once seen that if the free-soil forces, uniting the Whigs, Know-Nothings, and Republicans under one banner, could not carry Pennsylvania, the Republicans single-handed could not do so. On the same day, state elections were also held in Ohio and Indiana, and although Ohio went Republican, Indiana proved safely Democratic. Buchanan's election thus seemed doubly sure. Young Rutherford B. Hayes expressed the opinion of a host of Republicans. "Before the October elections in Pennsylvania and Indiana," he wrote, "I was confident Colonel Frémont would be elected. But the disastrous results in those states indicate and will probably do much to produce his defeat. The majorities are small—very small—but they discourage our side."¹

More than a fortnight before the final election day, therefore, Frémont knew that he was virtually beaten. The Republican leaders affected to look forward confidently to the result, but their hopes were gone. To the end of his life, Frémont believed that if his wishes had been followed in the selection of Simon Cameron as running mate, and an organization developed in

¹ C. R. Williams, *Life of Rutherford B. Hayes*, I, 106, 107.

Pennsylvania sufficient to prevent Democratic corruption of the voters, he would have carried the state in both October and November, and the resulting prestige of the Republicans would have swept Indiana or Illinois into line.¹ This is doubtful, for even had Frémont won the state election, Buchanan's chances for carrying Pennsylvania in the national election would have remained good; the Whig supporters of Fillmore, who in Philadelphia outnumbered the Republicans three to one, would have still voted *en masse* against Frémont. But it is nevertheless a possibility—one of the great might-have-beens of American history.

The complete returns were just what the shrewder politicians expected. Of the thirty-one states, Buchanan carried nineteen, Frémont eleven, and Fillmore one; Buchanan had 174 electoral votes, Frémont 114, and Fillmore 8. No fewer than 1,341,264 votes were polled by Frémont, about a half million fewer than those received by Buchanan, and a half million more than those cast for Fillmore. New York was safely in the Frémont column, for his vote outside of the Democratic metropolis was prodigious; so was Ohio; so were Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. The two principal disappointments, aside from Pennsylvania, were Illinois and Indiana. Taking a broad view of the election, it was evident that the Republicans had been beaten by the Whig votes cast for Buchanan and Fillmore. Fillmore alone received the support of almost 900,000

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

Whigs and Native Americans, a third of them in the northern states. They were cast against a sectional party and to avert the threat of civil war, and not against Frémont.

Frémont took his defeat, for which he was prepared, philosophically, and Mrs. Frémont accepted it with a surprising restraint of emotion. Lilly, a girl of fourteen whose heart was set on the White House as a delightful place of residence, wept for hours, and was sternly sent out the next morning by Mrs. Frémont to walk up and down Washington Square until she regained control of herself. It was old Francis P. Blair, however, who took the reverse hardest. At the breakfast table in Ninth Street after the night of election returns his voice suddenly broke, and tears rolled down his cheeks.¹

As they looked about after election day, the Republicans had much with which to console themselves. The Whig party was dead; it was now evident that Millard Fillmore's campaign represented its expiring throes, and that it would never again figure in a presidential campaign. Such northern Democrats as President Pierce, Lewis Cass, and John A. Dix, detested by many free-soilers because of their complaisance toward slavery, had been stinging rebuked by their states; so had such New England Whigs as Choate and Caleb Cushing. In the brief space of six months the Republican party had succeeded in crystallizing public senti-

¹ I. T. Martin, *Recollections of Elizabeth Benton Frémont*, 79, 80.

ment throughout the North and establishing itself in that section as the dominant party. The *Tribune* rejoiced that the future success of the Republicans seemed certain, the *Herald* proposed that Frémont should be at once renominated for the campaign of 1860, and, in the *Evening Post*, Bryant proclaimed that the tide was becoming irresistible.¹

In those States of the Union which have now given such large majorities for Frémont, public opinion, which till lately has been shuffling and undecided in regard to the slavery question, is now clear, fixed, and resolute. If we look back to 1848, when we conducted a Presidential election on this very ground of opposition to the spread of slavery, we shall see that we have made immense strides towards the ascendancy which, if there be any grounds to hope for the perpetuity of free institutions, is yet to be ours. We were then comparatively weak, we are now strong; we then counted our thousands, we now count our millions; we could then point to our respectable minorities in a few States, we now point to State after State. . . . The cause is not going back—it is going rapidly forward; the Free Soil party of 1848 is the nucleus of the Republican party of 1856; but with what accessions of numbers, of moral power, of influence, not merely in public assemblies, but at the domestic fireside!

¹ *N. Y. Evening Post*, Nov. 8, 1856.

For Frémont himself the outlook was of a less roseate character. He had borne himself through a heated and abusive campaign with notable dignity and poise, and he had emerged from it in higher public esteem than ever. The Republican party owed him much, for his gallant record and attractive personality had been just what were needed in the first national candidate of the new organization. But he was not a statesman or politician, and his rôle on the political stage was clearly ended. He had now concluded three great chapters of his life, as explorer, as fighter and organizer in California, and as the romantic hero chosen by the opponents of slavery to storm the presidency. Each had brought him distinction, and yet each had ended, in one sense, in defeat. What would be the fourth chapter? He did not know, and for the present he could merely turn back to the vexatious business affairs which he had dropped the previous autumn.

Historians of the period have, almost without exception, declared it fortunate that Frémont was not elected and that the United States did not have to face the possible ordeal of civil war under a head so inexperienced in affairs of state, so rash and impetuous, so brilliantly erratic. Assuming that secession would have followed a Republican victory, they are unquestionably right. At no stage of his career did Frémont exhibit the qualities indispensable to the head of a nation racked by civil strife; he held in reserve none of those powers which Lincoln, coming to Washington in 1861 and

seeming to many easterners totally incapable of meeting the crisis, possessed. But had there been no secession, Frémont would have made a better President than Buchanan. He would have shown none of the feebleness and pliancy of that Executive, and while doing his best to conciliate the South, would yet have capitulated to it in no essential point. Frémont always believed that, had he been elected, the influence of his and Mrs. Frémont's large family connections throughout the South, and of Benton's name, would have done much to prevent for all time a resort to arms.¹ During the campaign, he had given earnest attention to a plan, one which later commended itself to Lincoln, for the gradual abolition of slavery with compensation by the Federal Government, and had spent much time with Judge Jeremiah S. Black, the able Pennsylvanian who became Attorney-General and Secretary of State under Buchanan, in discussing its details.

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

CHAPTER XXIX

THE MARIPOSA WAR

FRÉMONT went to California soon after the election to look after his properties, and Jessie in the spring of 1857 took her children, two of whom had been seriously ill, to Paris for change and rest. They established themselves at St. Germain-en-Laye, and were here enjoying the forest, the donkey rides, and the country people when news came by a friend that Senator Benton was near his end. He had written Jessie that he was troubled only by a slight fistula, when actually he was painfully dying from cancer. She at once caught a steamer home, while at the same time Frémont returned to New York from the West, and during the winter they were both with the venerable Senator, whom they found shockingly thin and changed. Unfortunately, continued difficulties over the Mariposa estate called Frémont back to the Pacific, and, in February, Jessie left with him on the Panama route. She tells us that during part of the voyage a dull, haunting depression gripped her, and that early in April she broke down completely, unable to eat or sleep and submerged in gloom. The attack departed as quickly as it had come, and at the Mariposas she wholly recovered her spirits. One day Frémont's lawyer and his wife rode out to

the ranch house, and Jessie relates in characteristic fashion what followed:¹

He left her sitting on her horse outside the gate, and I went to her to say some polite word. She surprised me by saying that she was glad to see me in colors, and cheerful again.

"Why not?" I answered. "I am very well now."

"O, so soon after your father's death. . . ." Her husband sprang over the fence and seizing her bridle tore off with her heedless of bushes and every obstacle.

Mr. Frémont was by me at once. "Is my father dead?" I asked. For answer he gathered me in his arms and as I asked when, I saw his tears. . . .

April the tenth the soul was freed.

The Frémonts had settled, for what was to prove an exciting summer on the Mariposa estate, in a roomy two-story cottage in a pretty mountain meadow three miles from the quartz mines, and half a mile from the hamlet called Bear Valley. It had been occupied by their agent, who had left a good collection of English and French books when he departed. The household numbered seven, for in addition to the Frémonts, their daughter and the two boys, there was an attractive English lad of aristocratic family, Charles Douglas Fox, and Colonel Frémont's niece Nina, a graceful, vivacious girl of eighteen. Frémont had also brought

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

out with him a New York youth of twenty-one, named John R. Howard, whose father had been generously and influentially active in the campaign of 1856, and who wished to combine sight-seeing with mining experience on the Coast.

Here for a time everything seemed serene and comfortable. Money was pouring in, for the ore mills whose rising and falling stamps filled the valley with a continuous clamor furnished a weekly revenue of \$2,600 when Jessie first arrived, and the output steadily increased. The young people made free use of the stable, including the Colonel's own spirited mount, the sorrel. During the day the family read, wrote, and chatted indoors; but after the sun sank behind the western hills, they could climb the slopes or gallop down the valleys. For the hottest weather, a camp had been established atop a neighboring mountain, where the high air was always crisp, and where they could look northeast over the wonderful panorama of the Yosemite Valley, the far-off silver falls, and the heights surrounding them. Sometimes Frémont was at the estate, rising and riding off to the mines almost before dawn; sometimes, in company with the elder Howard and his attorney, he was in San Francisco or Monterey on business. Jessie was told nothing of the excitement and danger that were gathering about them; as a result, she was not alarmed when one morning there came a knock on the window of the bedroom used by Frémont and herself, and a voice announced:

"Colonel, the Hornitas League has jumped the Black Drift!"

"What does that mean?" she asked.

"Only mining work," Frémont answered. "You had best go to sleep again."

And in the refreshing coolness of the dawn she did sink back to sleep.

The Supreme Court, in a historic opinion written by Chief Justice Taney, and of great importance as a precedent on Mexican land grants, had duly confirmed Frémont's title to the Mariposa estates during 1855.¹ This decision followed an impressive and brilliant legal duel between Attorney-General Cushing and John J. Crittenden. Mr. Crittenden, we are told, "brought into the argument not only legal acumen and research, but all the impassioned eloquence that has distinguished his most powerful efforts, whether in the Senate or before judicial forums, and was listened to with marked attention by a crowded audience of the beauty and intellect at present congregated in the city. We presume from all we have heard that the eloquent Kentuckian equalled, if he did not surpass, any previous effort, forensic or senatorial."² But this victory proved only the beginning of fresh difficulties.

Taking his Federal patent, the Colonel had requested the state authorities to measure off seventy square miles along both banks of the Merced River in a long, irreg-

¹ Howard, *Supreme Court Reports*, XVII, 564 ff.; Charles Warren, *History of the Supreme Court*, II, 350.

² *Washington National Intelligencer*, Feb. 26, 1855.



FRÉMONT COTTAGE AT MARIPOSA AND JESSIE FRÉMONT
(Here Horace Greeley, R. H. Dana, Jr., and other noted men were entertained.)

ular strip. They quite properly refused, holding that in the interests of the public the grant must be compact; whereupon Frémont, who under the vague terms of the grant had a wide latitude of choice, caused his estate to be so defined as to include valuable mining claims theretofore in the possession of others. The length of this property was seventeen miles, and its width varied greatly. His action was perfectly legal—doubtless also perfectly equitable—but in the eyes of a good many miners it seemed unjust, and aroused their warm resentment. It would in any event have been impossible for Frémont to “locate” his estate without awakening the jealousy and ill will of men who had swarmed over that region for gold. The whole tract—on which Frémont ultimately found twenty-nine different gold-bearing veins—had been overrun by prospectors who had cut up its fields, chopped down its timber, and used its grass at will, leaving Frémont the privilege of paying the taxes, which shortly reached \$16,000 a year. A suit at law was brought against him by the Merced Mining Company, and armed violence was threatened against him and his property by irresponsible men, some of them under the Company’s influence.

The news that the Hornitas League had seized the Black Drift meant that a body of aggrieved miners and hired thugs, variously estimated at from seventy-five to one hundred and twenty in number, had taken possession of one of Frémont’s richest shafts. A recent court decision by Judge Berry had interpreted

the California law as giving all persons the right to enter and hold any "unoccupied" claim or mine. The Merced Company had bribed the night watchman of the Black Drift mine to leave his shaft open to them, and had at once entered and fortified it. Fortunately for Frémont, one of two neighboring shafts which the League wished to capture was occupied by six men still working there, so that the invaders could lay siege to them only at the entrance. All three mines opened out, high on the mountain side, upon a small leveled platform just large enough to enable the ox teams to load the ore and turn easily with it, and reached only by a single narrow road cut into the face of the mountain. The rocky slope fell almost perpendicularly below this road sixteen hundred feet to a ravine opening to the Merced River. Here was now the scene of a stubborn contest of armed forces. The six besieged miners entrenched themselves behind rocks, machinery, and powder kegs; the Hornitas League lay on its arms about them, and plotted how to capture the whole property; while farther down the road Frémont's hastily rallied force of some twenty men tried to cut off the League from reinforcements. A single shot, fired by chance, might be the signal for a bloody battle.¹

It is unnecessary to relate in detail the steps by which the attack was foiled. How the seventeen-year-old English boy, Douglas Fox, saddled Lilly Frémont's horse Ayah; how, knowing that all the roads and trails

¹ John R. Howard, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Ch. 9.

were guarded, he led it up a hidden mountain path and over the summit; how he dashed along the banks of the Merced into the town of Coultersville; how from here messengers were hurried off to Stockton, eighty miles distant; and how the Governor at once ordered five hundred militia to the Mariposas, promising to follow himself if necessary. The troops came in good season, for not a shot had been fired by the forces watching each other about the mines. Jessie's relief was enormous. She had been threatened with personal injury if the Leaguers captured her, and her servants had been instructed to shoot her rather than let her fall into their hands.¹ One of the Hornitas leaders immediately deserted to Frémont's side, saying: "When I go gunning next time I'll make sure first if we are after wild duck or tame duck"; and thereafter such troubles as Frémont had with the Mariposa property were confined to the courts and counting rooms.

The Colonel now rapidly pushed forward the physical development of the estate. A storage dam was built on the Merced and gave them water power in place of the steam power which had been denuding the mountain sides; new and better ore-crushing apparatus—"the Benton Mills"—was installed on the river; and with the aid of hundreds of Chinese workmen, a railroad nearly four miles in length was built, winding along the steep slopes with connecting links of trestlework. Smelting works were erected in the village. Hon-

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

est shopkeepers were brought in, a Viennese baker and an Italian restaurant keeper were imported to prepare food for the men who had no wives; and to maintain public order, Frémont required that his employees must not drink nor carry weapons. The village was as peaceful as a New England mill town.

It need not be said that Frémont was now, through his wealth and renown, one of the first citizens of California. The country was full of colonels; but when men spoke of "the Colonel," as Richard Henry Dana said, they meant Frémont. When Horace Greeley visited the Pacific slope in the early part of 1859, he spent some days with the Frémonts at Mariposa, and wrote a glowing letter to the *Tribune* upon the prosperity of the settlement and the orderliness and productiveness of the estate. Frémont told him that his aggregate liabilities from taxes, from litigation, and from the costs of development, had mounted, when he returned to California in 1857, to at least \$500,000. He had set to work resolved to extricate his great property. "In the spirit of that determination," wrote Greeley, "he has since lived and labored, rising with the lark and striving to obtain a complete knowledge and mastery of the entire business, taking more and more labor and responsibility upon his own shoulders as he felt able to bear them, until he is now manager, chief engineer, cashier, accountant, and at the head of every other department but law, for which he finds it necessary still to rely upon professional aid." His mines were at length

becoming profitable. His steam mill near his home ran eight stamps a day and night to crush the ore, and his water mill on the Merced ran twelve stamps. The two, Greeley declared, "are producing gold at the rate of at least \$250,000 per annum, at an absolute cost, I am confident, of not more than \$150,000." Always sanguine, Frémont was talking of having a hundred stamps in constant operation before the close of 1860; and with that number, expected to clear at least \$10,000 a week, which would soon relieve him of his burden of indebtedness.¹

The editor was surprised by the luxury in which Jessie lived, and inquiring how she managed to provide herself with beautifully ruffled muslin gowns and French cooking, ejaculated: "Well, you have executive faculty—my poor wife has none."² R. H. Dana, Jr., visited them at about the same time, and was equally charmed by the beauty of the spot and the attractiveness and comfort with which the house had been fitted up. He had been in California or off its coast, collecting the experiences described in *Two Years Before the Mast*, in 1835-36, and he and the explorer drew many contrasts between the past and the present. Jessie tells us that it was a delightful visit, and that Dana told the Colonel he was "especially glad to have met you coming out of your mine on a mountain, and not in a parlor."

To escape the hot summer and withering dry air, in

¹ Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco*, 316 ff.

² *MS. Memoirs*.

the spring of 1859, Jessie returned to San Francisco and to a delightful surprise which Frémont had made ready for her—a new home. She was entranced when she saw it: a little promontory, jutting into San Francisco Bay opposite Alcatraz Island, and bearing the name “Black Point” from its thick covering of laurels. Standing on it, a sweeping glance embraced to the west the Golden Gate and the blue Pacific between its portals; far away over miles of water to the south the Contra Costa Mountains; and, beyond Alcatraz, more high hills. It had historic associations to add to its charms, for near by Frémont had rowed across the Bay and spiked the old brass Spanish guns. Once ensconced in the cottage here, isolated and yet within the city limits, Jessie found that all desire to return East left her. “At last,” she wrote, “after many wanderings, many separations, and many strange experiences, we saw a home of congenial beauty and repose—a home which time would make a fortune to our children as holders of this little property; its thirteen acres were more dear to me than the many miles and mines of the Mariposa.”¹ Unfortunately, the title to the property was clouded, and during the Civil War the Government was to order the seizure of the whole peninsula for military purposes.

Black Point was soon the meeting place of a small but congenial group of friends. One was Thomas Starr King, the slight, eloquent Yankee minister and patriot

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

who a little later did so much to save California to the Union; he arrived in the spring of 1860, and was at once writing East of dinners at Black Point with such other guests as Colonel Baker, the new senator from Oregon.¹ Another was Bret Harte, whose genius Jessie perceived in his newspaper writings before she knew his name. She insisted that the shy, proud, unhappy young journalist should visit her, and for more than a year he dined with the Frémonts every Sunday, bringing his manuscripts and listening to their praise and criticism. Mrs. Frémont was instrumental in securing his first appearance in the *Atlantic Monthly*, with the sketch called *The Legend of Monte del Diablo*, and did him a still larger service when, through General Beale, she obtained him a government appointment. "I shall no longer disquiet myself," he wrote, "about changes in residence or anything else, for I believe that if I were cast upon a desert island, a savage would come to me next morning and hand me a three-cornered note to say that I had been appointed governor at Mrs. Frémont's request, at \$2,400 a year."² He always spoke of Jessie as his "fairy godmother."

This free outdoor life in California, this management of one of the great American mines, suited Frémont's

¹ C. W. Wendte, *Thomas Starr King*, 90.

² Henry Childs Merwin, *Life of Bret Harte*, 34, 35. "Mrs. Frémont," writes Merwin, "was an extremely clever, kind-hearted woman, who assisted Bret Harte greatly by her advice and criticism, still more by her sympathy and encouragement. Bret Harte was always inclined to underate his own powers, and to be despondent as to his literary future." Harte named Lilly Frémont's pony "Chiquita" after the mare in his poem of that name. Many letters which he wrote the Frémonts were later lost in a fire in New York.

restless, adventurous, sanguine temperament precisely; but already forces were shaping to thrust him into a new and totally different field. The Mariposa did not prosper so rapidly as he wished. He soon learned the truth of the Spanish proverb that "it takes a mine to work a mine." Meanwhile, the clouds of war between the North and the South were gathering fast.

Following the election of Lincoln, Frémont, late in 1860, received a visit from Senator Baker, who had been campaigning in the East, and who brought him an intimation—Frémont took it as an assurance—that he might have the choice of a Cabinet position or one of the major diplomatic posts. Seward, indeed, had suggested that he be made secretary of war, and Lincoln had thought of him as minister to France.¹ However, a new crisis in the eternal "Mariposa business" seemed to stand in the way of his acceptance of either position. Needing funds for development, he had opened negotiations in Paris for the sale of half the estate. He wished to keep himself free to conclude this transaction, while he thought it would be preferable, if war actually broke out, to take an army in the field. Baker conveyed this message to Lincoln. As state after state seceded, Frémont and Starr King, talking earnestly of the situation, agreed that hostilities were inevitable. When, in January, 1861, Frémont and his lawyer, Frederick Billings, left California for Paris, he planned for this reason to stay but a few weeks. Jessie, who had

¹ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, IV, Ch. 24.



SAN FRANCISCO: A SCENE OF VIGILANTE DAYS
(Execution of the murderers Casey and Cora, 1856. From the *Weekly Illustrated London News*.)

suffered a bad carriage accident and was left behind, was instructed to join him in New York if he was given a military command, and affairs at the Mariposa were placed in rough shape for a protracted absence. Little did either think that they would never again set foot as owners on their famous estate.

Touching for a few days in New York in the middle of February, Frémont had a brief and cordial interview at the Astor House with Lincoln, who was on his way to Washington. He found the President-elect still strong in the belief that peace would be preserved; but all his own convictions were that fighting was near at hand.¹ By March, he was in France; there the news of the firing upon Fort Sumter reached him, and, writing instantly to Washington to offer his services, he was there notified that his abilities and experience had been recognized by appointment as one of the ranking Union generals.

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

CHAPTER XXX

THE CIVIL WAR: COMMANDER IN MISSOURI

FRÉMONT was Commander of the Department of the West—of the great military area comprising Illinois and all the states and territories between the Mississippi and the Rockies—with his headquarters in St. Louis.

St. Louis! Once the most hospitable and cordial of towns to all who bore the name of Frémont or Benton, now a shuttered, sullen, and hostile city. The hot July sun beat down upon a river that stretched empty from shore to shore—the steamboats laid up at their wharves with fires out and crews gone. The streets were half deserted, with knots of unemployed men glowering resentfully at the soldiers who patrolled the corners, with curtains drawn in the shop windows, and with the wheels of the few vehicles echoing loudly against empty warehouses.¹ Of the 160,000 people, a majority seemed to be definitely aligned against the Union. Hardly an American flag was flying; but in its stead the secession banner hung over the building in which recruiting for the Confederate armies was being publicly carried on, while in the best residential sections the Stars and Bars were lavishly displayed. Army officers, intimidated and few in number, dared not venture far from the arsenal,

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *Souvenirs*, 166.

the barracks, and the center of the city. At night, bands of ruffians, armed or unarmed, marched through the streets hurraing for Jeff Davis and the rebel cause.¹ This was the disaffected town, the metropolis of a half-disaffected state, in which Frémont arrived from New York on the morning of July 25, 1861.

The previous two months had been full of labor and anxiety. Overtaken in Europe by the news of war, and knowing how destitute of arms the Government was, he had instantly dropped his private affairs and begun examining field guns, rifles, and ammunition in both France and England. It was a characteristically hot-headed enterprise, for he had no authority from the Government, no certainty of a cent of money, and no knowledge even of how serious the war might be. But it was patriotic and timely.² By the end of May, Confederate agents—but no Federal emissaries—were on the ground. Our minister to France hesitated to support him, but in England Charles Francis Adams had the courage to do so. In the end, Frémont had contracted for \$75,000 worth of cannon and shells in England, and for 10,000 rifles in France, to be shipped at his personal charge if necessary; and Adams had boldly drawn on the Government to pay for them.³ Frémont, notified that he had been appointed one of the four first major-generals authorized by Congress, had then caught

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² J. B. McMaster, *United States During Lincoln's Administration*, 190.

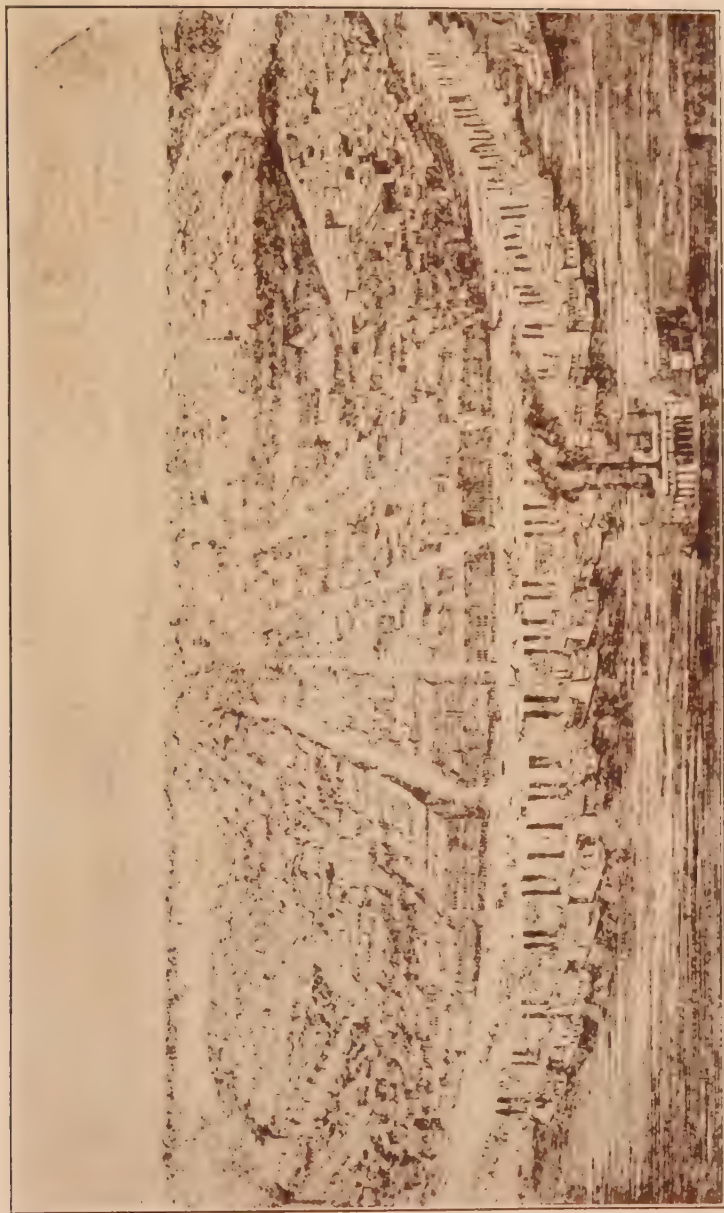
³ *MS. Memoirs; Official Records*, Series III, Vol. I, 193.

a fast ship, arrived at Boston on June 27, and had at once reported to the President in Washington.

He found a berth ready at hand. He and his old friend, Postmaster-General Montgomery Blair, had held conferences with Lincoln upon the command to which he should be assigned; and he tells us that although the military authorities suggested several eastern positions, he insisted upon the West.¹ This suited the views of Montgomery Blair. For the command in Missouri, the Blair family would have preferred their favorite, Nathaniel Lyon; but the conservative Unionists of that state, led by Attorney-General Edward Bates, would not hear of him. Frémont made an admirable compromise. At the beginning of July, the Western Department was created, with the understanding that it should include not only the loyal prairie states, but the wavering state of Kentucky as soon as Frémont had raised and organized a sufficient force to descend the Mississippi. He immediately took up the task of ascertaining what troops were available, how he could concentrate and drill his men, and where he could find supplies and arms.

In these hot July days, there were suddenly a million things to do. Frémont has been harshly criticized by Nicolay and Hay, chiefly upon the basis of statements which Montgomery Blair made after he became the General's enemy, for his delay in reaching St. Louis. This criticism is largely unjustified. He stayed in

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*



ST. LOUIS IN 1860

(The year when river transportation rose to its height. Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society.)

the East just three weeks, and would have left sooner—in fact, would have left on July 16 or 17—had he not thought that General Winfield Scott had further instructions for him.¹ He remained principally because his Department was destitute of munitions of all kinds, and he could best procure them from New York and Washington. The troops being enlisted in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and other states were wretchedly supplied with blankets, shoes, tents, uniforms, and firearms. Governor Richard Yates of Illinois, who was in Washington, declared that their condition was a public scandal. After obtaining the personal intervention of President Lincoln, Frémont received an order for only 17,000 stands of arms from the government arsenals, the number later being reduced to 5,000. In desperation, he examined various supplies of arms in the hands of private owners, and was on the point of having 25,000 carbines sent to the West; but finding that they were not rifled, he left the transaction uncompleted. The main object of the Administration at the moment was to equip the armies in Virginia, and it was difficult to interest the War Department in Missouri.

In these three weeks, Frémont was also assembling his aides and sketching the main outlines of a plan of campaign. As his chief of staff, he appointed General Alexander Asboth, a Hungarian who had served with distinction in the great revolt of 1848 and who had since been living in exile. As chief topographical engineer, he

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

appointed another Hungarian, Colonel John Fiala. From Cincinnati he summoned a lawyer of distinction, R. R. Corwin, to be judge-advocate of the Department. There were a multitude of other details to be attended to. As for Frémont's plan of campaign, its main features were the clearance of all rebels from Missouri, and a movement down the Mississippi upon Memphis; and Frémont tells us that he consulted Lincoln upon it:¹

The President had gone carefully over with me the subject of my intended campaign, and this with the single desire to find out what was best to do and how to do it. This he did in the unpretentious and kindly manner which invited suggestion, and which with him was characteristic. When I took leave of him, he accompanied me down the stairs, coming out to the steps of the portico at the White House; I asked him then, if there was anything further in the way of instruction that he wished to say to me. "No," he replied, "I have given you *carte blanche*; you must use your own judgment and do the best you can. I doubt if the States will ever come back."

It was nine o'clock of the blazing July morning when Frémont was ferried across to St. Louis, and, without pausing for rest, he called a staff meeting to take place at noon.² He immediately began the most strenuous

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² *N. Y. Tribune*, Aug. 9, 1861.

activity of his life. He rose at five in the morning and labored almost without intermission till twelve at night. The problems before him were staggering. The curtain had risen on the drama called "the hundred days in Missouri"—the drama which tested Frémont's strength and weakness as never before, and which fixed in the popular mind and in history a cruelly unjust impression of his character and capacities.

He had arrived at a critical moment, with disaster looming just ahead and prompt action imperative. Missouri, with a population of slightly more than a million, was attached to the South by race, by tradition, by a common history, and by similar institutions. When the Confederacy was formed, a militant minority took the view, at first partly concealed, that the state must join her southern sisters.¹ This group included the governor, Claiborne F. Jackson, the lieutenant-governor, both United States senators, and a majority of the legislature, and it had powerful newspaper support. Another group, for a time larger and stronger, believed that secession might ultimately be necessary, but that it should not be attempted until every hope of a peaceable adjustment of the difficulties between the North and the South had been destroyed. In this group were included ex-Governor Stewart, Alexander W. Doniphan, Sterling Price, and some influential editors. The trend of events slowly forced an alliance between many

¹ Thomas Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, in 1861, 53, 54.

of its members and the uncompromising secessionists, but the tact of the Union leaders saved a large part of this faction for the Federal cause. Beneath the American banner rallied, not merely many of the Lincoln Republicans of Missouri, who had cast only one-ninth of the ballots at the last election, but many of the followers of Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell, who were too much attached to the Union to countenance its disruption.

The struggle thus far in Missouri had been, in its main outlines, a contest between the astute secessionist governor, Claiborne Jackson, and the courageous Frank P. Blair, Jr., who was the brains and backbone of the Union element. Decisive measures by Blair and Captain (later General) Nathaniel Lyon had saved the St. Louis arsenal from the rebels when they were about to seize it. An equally decisive movement had enabled Lyon to strike the rebel militia—for Governor Jackson, issuing a proclamation of war, had called fifty thousand militia into service for the Confederacy—at Boonville, a town on the Missouri River, and after a sharp engagement to put them to flight. All this had occurred in June, before Frémont had even landed in New York.

The Unionists in the state had the advantage of superior numbers, for a heavy majority of the population were loyal; the Confederates had the advantage of superior boldness, energy, and quickness. There was genuine danger that the swiftly rallied rebels would

sweep all lower Missouri, take possession of Cairo and southernmost Illinois, where secessionist sentiment was strong, carry Kentucky into the Confederacy, and make even southern Indiana, where later the Knights of the Golden Circle flourished, doubtful territory. If they succeeded in doing this, the war would be practically lost for the North. Rebel camps were formed throughout a great part of Missouri, commissions were issued in a skeleton rebel army, and adventurous young men of pro-slavery sympathies flocked to the Confederate standard, delighted at the prospect of army life.¹ Governor Jackson and General Sterling Price united their forces, collected from these camps, in a formidable little army in the southwestern corner of the state. At Carthage, they soon came into collision with the Federal forces under General Franz Sigel, and, in a comparatively bloodless battle, defeated him and drove him back upon Springfield.²

When Frémont took command, the situation was thus at a point where real fighting was about to commence. Jackson and Price, flushed with their little victory, pleased to find that more Confederate volunteers were constantly joining them, and elated by the news of Bull Run, had just been reinforced by some troops from Arkansas, and were moving northward.

The Union flag was upheld at Springfield in southwestern Missouri by General Nathaniel Lyon, who had

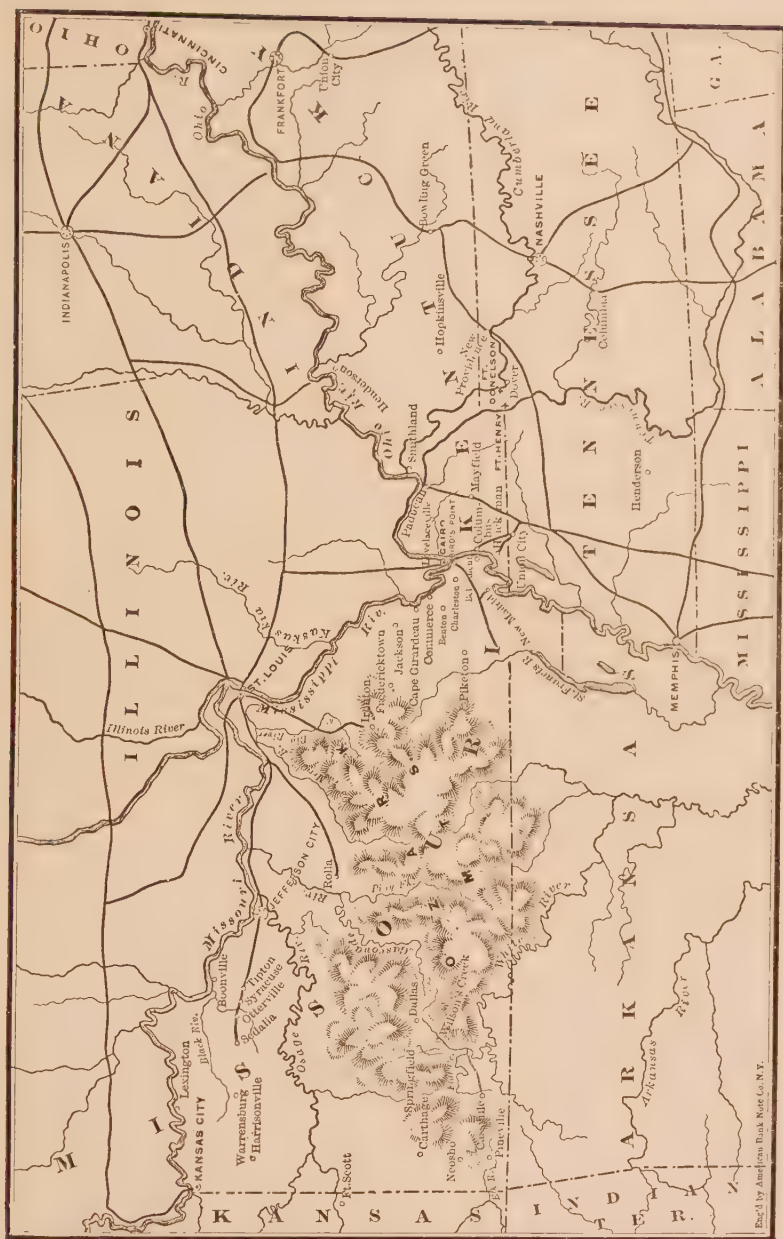
¹ See files of the *St. Louis Bulletin*, June, 1861.

² Thomas L. Snead, *The Fight for Missouri in 1861*, 227.

a combined force of Missouri and Kansas troops numbering between 7,000 and 8,000 men. In spite of this strength, Lyon's position was highly perilous. He had no adequate line of communications at his rear. From St. Louis, three railways then radiated—one toward the west, terminating at Sedalia, about three-fourths of the way across the state; one toward the southwest, ending at Rolla, scarcely halfway across the state; and the third toward the south, ending at Ironton, also hardly halfway across.¹ Between Lyon's army and the nearest railhead, at Rolla, stretched one hundred and twenty miles of broken country, with bad roads which any hard rain would make almost impassable. Provisions and supplies had failed to arrive as he had expected. Moreover, about half of his army consisted of the ninety-day men raised under President Lincoln's first proclamation, and their terms expired the middle of July. Many of these three-months volunteers would immediately re-enlist for a longer term, and many would remain for the battle which seemed to be impending; but there was nevertheless much confusion, and the army was materially shrinking.

If there was imminent danger threatening Lyon at Springfield, there was almost equally grave danger threatening the Federal forces at Cairo, the vital point at the junction of the Ohio and the Mississippi which must be used as a base for any advance into Kentucky. Major-General Leonidas Polk, commanding the Con-

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, Ch. 11, Ch. 23.



federates at Memphis, made preparations early in July to lead his Tennessee contingent into Missouri for a campaign with a double objective. One column, under McCulloch, was to proceed against Lyon at Springfield; while the other was to march up the Mississippi under Generals Pillow and Hardee to cut off Lyon's retreat toward the East, was to take St. Louis if possible, and on its return was to enter Illinois and capture Cairo.¹ This was rather too ambitious a program to be carried out. Nevertheless, about the time that Frémont arrived in St. Louis, Polk moved 6,000 troops up to New Madrid, where he reported that his force, with the German Unionists of Missouri in front of them, were "full of enthusiasm and eager for the 'Dutch hunt.'"² It was rumored in Missouri and Illinois that a further advance by Polk's troops was imminent. The frightened Union commander at Cairo, General Prentiss, sent a series of urgent messages to Frémont, imploring him to send help to save this great strategic key to the Mississippi Valley. He wrote July 23:

Have but eight regiments here. Six of them are three-months men. Their time expires this week—are reorganizing now. I have neither tents nor wagons, and must hold Cairo and Bird's Point.

He immediately followed this by informing Frémont that the rebels were about to capture Bird's Point, just across the Mississippi from Cairo, and that he had only

¹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 617 ff.

² Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 405.

two six-pounders ready to move. On July 29, 1861, he added another panicky appeal for aid:

On yesterday, three thousand rebels west of Bird's Point forty miles; three hundred at Madrid and three regiments from Union City ordered there; also troops from Randolph and Corinth. The number of organized rebels within fifty miles of me will exceed twelve thousand—that is, including Randolph troops ordered and not including several companies opposite in Kentucky.

On August 1 came still a further telegram imploring immediate help. Prentiss stated that the previous day General Pillow had been at New Madrid with 11,000 well-armed and well-drilled troops, two regiments of splendidly equipped cavalry, and a hundred pieces of artillery; that 9,000 more men were moving to reinforce him; and that he had promised to place 20,000 rebel troops in Missouri at once.

Frémont thus had to answer the demands of two widely separated commanders, each menaced by strong Confederate armies; he had to take steps to pacify Missouri, where a ghastly guerrilla struggle was beginning to break out; he had to organize the raw volunteers who were trickling into St. Louis, and to make frantic efforts to find them food, uniforms, and arms; and he had to keep the city, with its large population of rebel sympathizers, under strict control. All this had to be done by a man who had never commanded forces

of more than a few hundred, who had for years been engrossed in civilian pursuits, and who was new to the city, the post, and the problems about him. It was a situation that would have taxed the capacity of abler men than Frémont.

His first decision was, on the whole, the correct one: to send word to Lyon at Springfield that he had best fall back on his base at Rolla, and to hurry reinforcements forward to Cairo. There was no particular reason for holding Springfield. It was not an important strategic point. There was, however, every reason for safeguarding Cairo, which was vital for the command of the Ohio and the Mississippi. If Pillow really had the army credited to him, and if he could cross the Mississippi above Cairo and cut off Prentiss's force, the result might be a horrible disaster. Within a week after his arrival, Frémont, though burdened with other business, had chartered a fleet of eight steamboats, loaded them with soldiers and with artillery and stores which he had ordered from the East and set off down the river.¹ He had labored like a slave to make this expedition of nearly 4,000 men ready. The night before it started he retired at midnight, and was at his desk again at 4.30 a. m., where he remained till just before the departure of the flotilla at three o'clock in the afternoon.²

The trip, however, gave him, not only the first rest

¹ *St. Louis Republican*, quoted in *N. Y. Tribune*, Aug. 9, 1861.

² *N. Y. Herald*, Aug. 12, 1861.

he had enjoyed since he took up his command, but also the gratification of a wildly enthusiastic reception by the nervous little army under Prentiss. It was five o'clock of an effulgent day, the sun turning the Mississippi into a broad path of gold, when his flagship, the *City of Alton*, approached Cairo, and fired its eight-pounders as a signal. At once the guns on shore replied. For half an hour there was a perfect roar of artillery, the echoes rolling away into the woods of Missouri and Kentucky. The banks of the two rivers were peppered with troops, who were wild with excitement. As the *City of Alton*, bedecked with evergreens and flags, churned in to the Cairo water front, the wharves became black with uniformed men, yelling "Frémont! Frémont!"; and when Prentiss led the Commander down the gangplank and up to his headquarters at the St. Charles Hotel, the uproar was deafening.¹ He had come in the nick of time; Prentiss's army was small; it was in part fast disintegrating; and, in that swampy position, fever and dysentery were taking a heavy toll of it. Frémont had many of the sick transferred from the low ground to the breezy decks of his steamboats, and from that date he made use of floating hospitals wherever he could.²

Meanwhile, what of General Lyon? That commander was now in a mood which almost approached despair. He saw only retreat, or ruin, ahead of him. He

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Aug. 9, 10, 1861.

² *MS. Memoirs*.



RECRUITING ON BROADWAY, 1861

(From a photograph taken in early summer by Brady. The recruiting booth, topped by the American flag, stands at the corner of City Hall Park, opposite the Astor House. Note the stagers and the hoop-skirts.)

must go back, he wrote Assistant Adjutant-General Harding at St. Louis, unless he received large reinforcements and supplies.¹ "Our troops are badly clothed, poorly fed, and imperfectly supplied with tents. None of them have as yet been paid." A little later he charged the Administration and General Scott with an inexcusable neglect of the West, and said that they were allowing that section to become "the victim of imbecility or malice." Frémont had in fact appealed to Montgomery Blair, and Blair replied from Washington, on July 26, that it "is impossible now to get any attention to Missouri or western matters from the authorities here."² When Frémont opened his headquarters, three messengers were awaiting him from Lyon, all insisting that danger was imminent and that help must be sent to him at once.

As it proved, there was a good fortnight in which help might have been dispatched, and even a moderate force might have saved Lyon from defeat. But circumstances made it impossible for Frémont to furnish the required aid. It has been said that while he was taking 3,800 men to Cairo, he could also have sent several thousand by rail and wagon road to Springfield, and so have saved the day. But, as a matter of fact, the troops were simply not available. Adjutant-General Harding later testified that while large numbers of volunteers were arriving in St. Louis in the first days of

¹ Dispatch of July 15, 1861, before Frémont's arrival.

² *Congressional Globe*, March 7, 1862, p. 1126.

August, nearly all were unarmed, they were totally untrained and did not even know how to use a musket, and they were wholly without transport animals or wagons; and that regiment after regiment lay for days in the city without equipment, for the arsenals were empty. Having so few men, Frémont thought it unwise to divide his reinforcements. Above all, it can be urged in his defense that he expected Lyon to retreat, and issued orders with that definite end in view. As a matter of fact, he did on August 4 send two regiments marching toward Lyon's assistance, one from Boonville and the other from Leavenworth, Kansas—the only regiments available. He expected Lyon to retire to meet them.¹ One of the messengers who reached him from Springfield, entreating him for "soldiers, soldiers, soldiers," told him that Lyon would fight at that town whether he got more troops or not; to which Frémont replied, "If he fights, it will be upon his own responsibility."

By the beginning of August, the Confederate Army, under the command of McCulloch numbered almost 13,000 men. It began its march toward Springfield, about fifty miles distant, on July 31, and its approach filled Lyon with apprehension.² He exaggerated its numbers, believing that almost 30,000 men opposed him, and even when he learned its true size, he realized that his plight was desperate. His own force had by now

¹ Snead, *Fight for Missouri*, 253.

² *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 57 ff.

shrunk to about 5,000 effective troops. If he remained stationary, he would be surrounded and captured; if he retreated from Springfield, he would leave the southwestern section of Missouri, with its farm resources, lead mines, and thousands of volunteers, to the enemy. He would have to traverse a rough country, and cross many difficult streams and ravines. To do this with some 5,000 disheartened men, his passage encumbered by 400 army wagons, along roads blocked by crowds of refugees, would at best be a slow and painful operation. To do it with a powerful army hanging on his heels and a force of cavalry harrying his flanks might be dangerous.

Yet Lyon's duty was clear—it was to go back. A council of his officers three days before the battle showed that most believed a retreat to be proper and even imperative. The second in command to Lyon was General John T. Schofield, who always declared that the fruitless sacrifice at Wilson's Creek was unnecessary and wholly unjustifiable. As he wrote long afterward, "our retreat to Rolla was open and perfectly safe, even if begun as late as the night of the ninth. A few days or a few weeks at most would have made us amply strong to defeat the enemy and drive him out of Missouri, without serious loss to ourselves." Schofield urged this opinion upon Lyon with vehemence. As for Frémont's orders, on August 6, he sent a letter to Lyon which reached the latter on the 9th; and although this letter has unfortunately been lost, we have two state-

ments, corroborating one another, as to its contents. Both Schofield and Frémont tell us that it instructed Lyon that if he were not strong enough to maintain his position at Springfield, he should fall back toward Rolla until he was met by reinforcements.¹ But Lyon was headstrong, he exaggerated the disaster to the loyal citizens of the region if he abandoned them to the Confederate wrath, and he moved out to attack McCulloch's force of more than twice his numbers.

It was desperate, it was foolhardy, it was blameworthy, but it was sublime, and the news of that hopeless attack and its tragic result sent a thrill throughout the North. In the faint summer dawn of August 10, Franz Sigel fell suddenly with 1,200 men upon the enemy's flank, while simultaneously Lyon with 3,700 troops went into action against their left center. Sigel was repulsed, but Lyon drove the enemy out of their camp, and then as the morning advanced threw back attack after attack by the Confederates, desperately trying to regain their positions. Within its limits, it was one of the fiercest encounters of the Civil War. The two main lines of battle, Federal and Confederate, were less than a thousand yards in length. Yet along this line almost every available company was brought into action. The Confederates would appear out of the billowing smoke in ranks three or four deep, one file lying down to fire, another kneeling, and one or two standing, and they sometimes pushed to within thirty or forty

¹ *MS. Memoirs; John T. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army, 40.*



BATTLE OF WILSON'S CREEK, NEAR SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI, AUGUST 10, 1861
(The drawing shows Lyon, on horseback, rallying his troops for a counter-attack upon the Confederates.
From *Harper's Weekly*.)

yards of the Union rifles and cannon before they were repulsed. Both Price and Lyon exhibited the greatest personal gallantry, Lyon receiving three wounds without going to the rear. At last, a final heavy assault was made by the Confederates, and Lyon, leaping upon a horse and waving his hat in air, called to some fragments of reserves to close ranks and plunge into the *melée*.¹ A part of the Second Kansas surged forward beside him, and as they met the Confederate line a ball pierced Lyon's breast. He fell from his horse and died almost instantly. A few minutes later, at half-past eleven in the morning, the chief surviving officers held a hasty council and gave the order to the Federals to retreat.

As graphic accounts of the battle of Wilson's Creek—for so it was called—appeared in the Northern press, and as Lyon's body with much pomp and public sorrow was taken from city to city to be buried at his New England home, the first loud criticism of Frémont arose. It was easy to say that he should have reinforced Lyon, and many said it. It was not so easy to say that Lyon should have retreated; nobody outside Missouri knew that Frémont had ordered him to do so unless he were certain of his safety, for Frémont never published his letter. Nobody knew how Cairo had been imploring Frémont for men, how limited were his forces at St. Louis, and how insistent President Lincoln had been that Cairo should be safeguarded at all costs. The con-

¹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 62.

sequence was that Frémont was attacked then and later for a catastrophe which it had been almost beyond his power to prevent.

Once the criticism of Frémont was fairly loosed, it found much upon which to feed. No man on earth could have taken charge of the chaotic Department of the West, no general could have tried to bring prepared armies out of that confusion of unpreparedness, without committing blunders and making enemies. Frémont's blunders were peculiarly unhappy, and his enemies were soon a host.

His industry was unceasing, and within a few weeks he had to his credit an important list of achievements, to which his defenders were later able to point with warm praise. He policed the city, stopped the Confederate recruiting which had been openly conducted at the Berthold Mansion, and made life and property secure. He ordered General John Pope to northern Missouri, and gave him instructions to organize local committees of safety and halt the guerrilla warfare being waged there by Confederate sympathizers. Since approximately ten thousand of the men under his command were three-months volunteers, and it was urgently necessary to keep them under arms while the raw recruits were being drilled, he personally guaranteed their pay if they would stay a fourth month.¹ The morale of the officers showed an immediate improvement following his arrival; tippling ceased, and the booksellers re-

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

ported an unusual demand for Hardee's *Tactics* and Scott's *Tactics*.¹ He ordered a reorganization of the Reserve Corps in St. Louis, to be enlisted for the war, and to comprise infantry, cavalry, and artillery units. In the first few days after he assumed command, he took possession of the Iron Mountain and the Pacific railroads, stationed small forces to protect them, garrisoned Ironton with a force under Colonel B. Gratz Brown, and took equal precautions for the safety of Cape Girardeau—these points being important for the defense of St. Louis.

Arms and money were desperately needed in the Department; many of the soldiers had long been unpaid, and some volunteers as they arrived had to be set drilling with sticks, while even the trained men were armed with almost anything; some with smooth bores, some with rifled muskets, and some with nothing but sabers.² As July closed, he appealed to the War Department agent in New York. The Adams Express Company, he wired, would bring by passenger train any arms directed to him; "send everything you have"; the arsenal was empty; "we must have arms—any arms, no matter what." At the same time, he appealed directly to Lincoln:³

I am sorely pressed for want of arms. I have arranged with Adams Express Company to bring

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Aug. 12, 1861.

² *MS. Memoirs*.

³ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 416.

me everything with speed, and will buy arms today in New York. Our troops have not been paid, and some regiments are in a state of mutiny, and the men whose term of service is expired generally refuse to enlist. I lost a fine regiment last night from inability to pay them a portion of the money due. This regiment had been intended to move on a critical post last night. The treasurer of the United States had here \$300,000 entirely unappropriated. I applied to him yesterday for \$100,000 for my paymaster-general, Andrews, but was refused. We have not an hour for delay. There are three courses open to us. One, to let the enemy possess himself of some of the strongest points in the State and threaten St. Louis, which is insurrectionary. Second, to force a loan from secession banks here. Third, to use the money belonging to the government, which is in the treasury here. Of course I will neither lose the state nor permit the enemy a foot of advantage. I have infused energy and activity into the department, and there is a thorough good spirit in officers and men. This morning I will order the treasurer to deliver the money in his possession to Gen. Andrews, and will send a force to the treasury to take the money, and will direct such payments as the exigency requires. I will hazard everything for the defence of the department you have confided to me, and I trust to you for support.

Frémont's plan was to take the field with his army as soon as possible; and he argued that in order to hold St. Louis as his base, he would either have to garrison it with a considerable force, or fortify it. As events turned out, St. Louis was soon perfectly safe. At the moment, however, his reasoning did not appear fallacious. He began digging a crescent-shaped line of intrenchments about the city, employing not the new recruits, who needed drilling and were in large part unfit for such heavy work in the August heat, but the laboring population of St. Louis. The city was full of turbulent unemployed men, their families in want, who presented a constant danger of riots, and the distribution of fair government wages was an important factor in pacifying the community. In the same way, Frémont planned to fortify Cape Girardeau, Ironton, Rolla, and Jefferson City, and thus enable small garrisons to hold the state tranquil.¹ Enlisting a confidential agent, or, in plain English, a spy, named Captain Charles D'Arnaud, the General sent him within the Confederate lines, to prepare a correct map of the highways, bridges, and forts in Kentucky and western Tennessee, and to ascertain the probable movements of the enemy. D'Arnaud shortly returned with much of the desired information, and with useful maps of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, then being constructed.

In order to expedite the transportation of troops, Frémont promptly took two steps of great importance.

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

The railroads entering St. Louis had different terminals, some of them far from the river. The General had a union station built and fortified on the river bank, so that, upon a day's notice, 20,000 troops could be moved through the city from a point on one railway to a point on another. Troops arriving from Illinois could be ferried directly to the station with all their supplies, without need of wagons to haul them through the streets. It was a common-sense move. At the same time, Frémont began to organize a river service. He asked Governor Morton of Indiana, as it turned out, ineffectually, for some regiments of men experienced in steamboating; and upon his own authority he sent for a veteran river captain in St. Louis, Thomas Maxwell, and authorized him to organize a "marine corps" of pilots, engineers, mates, firemen, and sailors, three companies in all.¹ On the very day he crossed the Mississippi to take command, Frémont directed his chief of staff, Asboth, to find out what river boats were available for refitting as gunboats. Asboth and Fiala, as it happened, were familiar with the armed craft used by the Austrians upon the lower Danube. Within a short time, not only were a number of old steamers being armed and ironclad, but a fleet of much-needed new mortar boats and gunboats was being constructed. Captain James B. Eads was frequently at headquarters, and the drawing of the plans was given into his control.

¹ *Senate Ex. Doc. 412*, 57th Congress, 1st session, p. 195 ff.

Unfortunately, while Frémont was carrying through these constructive labors, he was making a series of errors, small in detail but large in the aggregate, which were destined to cost him dear. Reports soon reached the East that he was vain, capricious, and arrogant. It was complained that he had taken for his headquarters an elegant private mansion at a rental of \$6,000 a year; that the Hungarian and Garibaldian officers whom he had brought as his personal staff wore gaudy uniforms and used fantastic titles; that he clattered through the streets with an ostentatious bodyguard; that he was so hedged about with sentinels that it was impossible to see him on business; that he issued commissions and gave out contracts in a shockingly irregular way; and that he and his assistants were almost criminally extravagant.¹ He was accused of surrounding himself with a knot of flatterers, and of ignoring able but plain-spoken men.

In these charges, unhappily, there was a limited element of truth. Frémont's use of the splendid residence of Colonel J. B. Brant on Chouteau Avenue was entirely proper, for it enabled him to house under one roof the whole administrative activities of his Department. Here, on the second floor, he had his desk, that of General Asboth, his secretaries John R. Howard and William Dorsheimer, and a few other men. Large tables were placed in the room and covered with maps, diagrams, calculations of distances, and similar mate-

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 412.

rial prepared with care by Asboth.¹ Downstairs were the other staff officers. In the basement was a veritable arsenal, from which arms and ammunition were dealt out for emergency service. But Frémont guarded the approaches by such an array of sentries that men complained it was like capturing the Gorgon's head to fight their way in. General G. B. Farrar, who brought an important message from Springfield, declared that it took him three days to gain an audience with Frémont; that there were guards at the street corners, guards at the gate, guards at the outer door, guards at the office, and a whole regiment of troops in the adjacent barracks.²

The personnel and titles of Frémont's staff were certain to grate upon rough and practical westerners. He had brought with him not merely the Hungarians named, and Major Charles Zagonyi, who organized a spirited cavalry battalion, but such Italians as Captain Antonio Cattanco, Captain Ajace Saccippi, and Lieutenant Dominica Occidone.³ There were twenty-eight staff members, altogether too many. Some of them bore sonorous and absurd foreign names—"adletus to

¹ Gustav Koerner, *Memoirs*, II, 170 ff. Of course the fact that Brant was a relative of Mrs. Frémont's made the \$6000 rental seem suspicious to some. Actually it was not excessive.

² Ida M. Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, II, Ch. 24. As page in the Frémont headquarters there served a lad named Francis Grierson, who had been born in England and reared in Illinois, and who was destined to become a noted mystic and essayist. His impressions, recorded in Chapter 22 of *The Valley of Shadows; Recollections of the Lincoln Country*, have slender historical value but great literary charm. He was impressed, as a boy would be, by the pomp and parade surrounding the headquarters, and by the strangeness of the foreign officers.

³ *St. Louis Democrat*, July 26, 1861.



(Frémont, Jessie, and two friends, 1861. From the Meserve collection.)



(Frémont as Major-general, 1861. Photograph by Brady, from the Meserve collection.)

FRÉMONT IN THE "HUNDRED DAYS"

the chief of staff," "commander of the bodyguard," "musical director," and "military registrator and expeditor." Among the fifteen aides-de-camp were several politicians, who received no pay but lent their assistance in order to exert their influence upon affairs. They included Owen Lovejoy, a portly, kindly, rhetorically eloquent gentleman, who sat in Congress for the Princeton district of Illinois, and who, embittered by the death of his brother Elijah many years before at the hands of an anti-Abolitionist mob, was warmly opposed to slavery; John A. Gurley, well known as an Abolitionist leader and a representative from Ohio; and Representative John P. C. Shanks of Indiana, also of radical antislavery views. This trio was close to Frémont, as were also young Howard and young Dorsheimer, his immediate secretaries. Dorsheimer, a lawyer with a Harvard education, had ability, and later rose to be lieutenant-governor of New York, but his aristocratic elegance (he had a valet to dress and undress him) amused many observers. Gustav Koerner, a brilliant young German-American, served on the staff as the representative of Governor Yates of Illinois.

Unfortunate in some members of his personal staff, Frémont was unfortunate also in several officers of the regular army whom he found stationed in St. Louis. The most important, bustling, and obnoxious of these was Colonel John McKinstry, the quartermaster-general, who was made provost-marshal of St. Louis when the city was placed under martial law. A tall, dashing

fellow, with dark complexion, resolute features, and "an eye like Mars to threaten and command," he looked, especially when galloping about the streets, the *beau idéal* of a soldier.¹ But he had always been unpopular in the Army, and now as censor of the activities of the St. Louisians he was hated by the people with fierce intensity. His refusal to let anyone enter or leave the city without passes, his rule that nobody should be on the streets after 9 p. m., and other restrictions, aroused bitter complaint. He was the cause of much of the unpopularity which quickly enveloped Frémont.

Frémont cannot be exonerated from blame for the chaos, friction, and extravagance which arose; a commander with more practical vigor and *savoir-faire* would have cut through many of the difficulties directly. He would have mastered affairs, instead of letting them master him. In a word, the General lacked high executive ability. Yet a great deal can be said in defense of Frémont. Much of the irregularity in letting contracts, the general confusion, and the tactless exclusion of important visitors, arose from the fact that he was crushed under a mountain of labor. He had to conduct an enormous correspondence with the Governors of the states and territories in his Department, with Washington officials, with his scattered commands, and with private citizens. It was more than Dorsheimer, Howard, and his devoted wife, Jessie, who shortly arrived at the Brant mansion, could manage. His troops were

¹ Koerner, *Memoirs*, II, 169.

strewn all over the West—part in Missouri, part in Kansas, part in Chicago, part in southern Illinois, and soon part in Paducah, Kentucky. Once he kept his telegraphers busy thirty-six hours without intermission.¹ With the lesson of Bull Run before him, he had resolved not to move forward till he had organized his force and collected adequate supplies; and Washington, intent on the eastern armies, hindered rather than aided him.

Necessarily, he had to depute much business to subordinates, who sometimes managed it badly. Breezy western citizens, who thought that everybody, whether President, Senator, or General, should stop and give them a half hour's chat, were turned back by sentries with a curt "What's your business?" or, if they gained entry, found Frémont preoccupied and hurried. They went out denouncing him as aristocratic and cold, when he was only protecting his time. Frémont's green staff made constant mistakes, for they did not know the difference between a rascally contract hunter and a distinguished citizen of St. Louis, and sometimes admitted the former while debarring the latter. Their inexperience conspired with Frémont's own impatience of red tape to produce many irregularities. The unauthorized issuance of commissions became the despair of the War Department, while orders and requisitions were frequently signed without scrutiny. General Schofield tells us that he went repeatedly to Frémont for authority to have certain rifled guns in the St. Louis ar-

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Aug. 12, 1861.

senal issued to his new artillery regiment; that he always received the authority, but before he got to the armory it was invariably countermanded by telegraph; and that finally he suggested to Frémont that he be sent East to procure fieldpieces and equipment. Frémont at once acquiesced, bade Schofield sit down and write the necessary order, and "signed it without reading." Even a well-known and able Missouri member of Congress, John Phelps, came down the steps of the Brant House in high dudgeon, complaining that he could see nobody and get no business attended to.

In many ways the Department of the West in the middle of August, 1861, seemed a mess; and yet the mess was by no means altogether Frémont's fault, while he had accomplished much that was of permanent value.

The increasing storm of criticism, made louder by prejudice and ignorance, and swelled by the clamor of selfish "patriots" who had been refused contracts for horses, beef, mules, or wagons, and who were highly disgruntled,¹ dismayed and disconcerted Frémont. He winced under the attacks. At the same time, in the first weeks after Lyon's defeat and the retreat of his shattered army to Rolla, the military situation seemed full of the gravest peril.

The Union leaders believed that there were now 60,000 or 70,000 armed rebels in the state, of whom perhaps 40,000 were Missourians. Troops had suddenly appeared in great force from Arkansas, Tennessee, and

¹ Koerner, *Memoirs*, II, 168.

other states, and with the benefit of the comprehensive military plan matured by Leonidas Polk and others, had overrun half the state. Living on the country, they were seizing the horses, grain, meat, clothing, and other supplies of Union citizens.¹ Meanwhile, in the central and northern part of Missouri, the rebel guerillas, recruited from the countrysides, were committing the most appalling outrages. They were burning bridges, wrecking railway trains, cutting telegraphs, raiding farms, and falling in sudden force upon exposed Union units, only to scatter again in a hundred directions. Their warfare was driving the loyal population by thousands to take refuge, penniless, in Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas. There seemed danger that parts of the state would become a howling wilderness. Nobody knew where Pillow and McCulloch would strike next.

It was under these circumstances that Frémont, who believed some decisive stroke to be necessary, resolved suddenly upon a proclamation of military emancipation. In this step he was unquestionably urged forward by his immediate associates. There were two parties among the loyal citizens of Missouri, the radical Union men or "charcoals," and the conservatives, or "claybanks." The former, who included most of the Germans, believed in aggressive, uncompromising action, while the latter advocated patience, conciliation, and caution. It was the former who surrounded Frémont, and who, with Lovejoy, Gurley, and Shanks among their spokesmen, had

¹ See summary, *N. Y. Tribune*, Sept. 2, 1861.

obtained a marked influence with him. They held a decided conviction with regard to the slaves of rebels. Secession, they reasoned, had destroyed all the constitutional protection and safeguards which formerly shielded southern citizens; it was now perfectly legal to confiscate the property of men in arms, and slaves were of course property. Every report of outrage and destruction in peaceful Union counties, of depredations by bushwhackers and guerrilla gangs, was an argument for stern measures.¹ Men were being killed and their homes wiped out. Should the Federal Government hesitate to free the slaves of the miscreants responsible for such acts? To this view, Mrs. Frémont was completely won over, and she added her arguments to those of Lovejoy and Gurley.

How long Frémont debated the question with himself and others, we do not know; but he himself tells us that when he decided to act, he moved with his accustomed impetuosity:²

The State outside of the fortified points was becoming more and more unsettled. The farmers would, when notified, join the camps of the rebel commanders in great numbers, suddenly augmenting their forces, and then, if the projected raid or attack was deferred, would return again to their homes, reducing the force correspondingly.

In this manner, however, it was impossible to

¹ Cf. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 417.

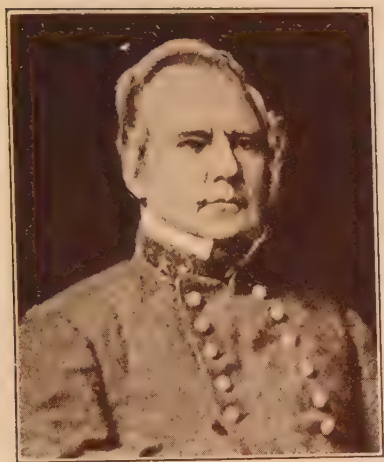
² *MS. Memoirs*.

foresee which point would be threatened next, and failing sufficient troops to control the State through force of arms, it became necessary to devise some means to prevent this guerrilla warfare. The credit of the government was about used up, and it had so lost prestige through the non-payment of its debts to the soldiers, and those who furnished the supplies, that it was regarded with contempt by the Secessionists, and many Unionists came to doubt its power to compel. For many days and nights the situation had been a most anxious one for Gen. Frémont; with unfilled requisitions in Washington, commanders of troops demanding reinforcements where there were none to give, troops clamoring for pay when there was no money. . . . He determined to force the rebel sympathizers, who did not join the rebel armies as soldiers, to remain at home, and to make them feel that there was a penalty for rebellion, and for aiding those who were in rebellion.

On the morning of the 30th of August, shortly after daybreak, Mrs. Frémont found Gen. Frémont at his desk. He had sent for Mr. Edward Davis, of Philadelphia, who arrived as she came. It was sufficiently light to see plainly, and the General said, "I want you two, but no others." Then in the dawn of the new day, he read the Emancipation Order, that first gave freedom to the slaves of rebels, and which he had thought out

and written, in the hours taken from his brief resting time.

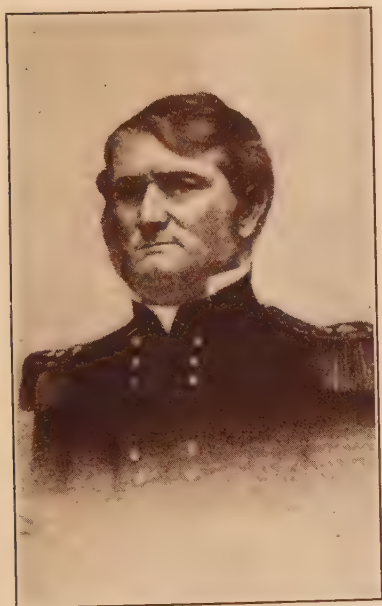
The proclamation with which Frémont thus took the nation by surprise declared that he found it necessary to thrust aside the provisional governor and assume the administrative powers of the disordered state; that all Missouri would thenceforth be under martial law; that the lines of the Union Army should for the present be understood to extend from Leavenworth by way of Jefferson City, Rolla, and Ironton to Cape Girardeau on the Mississippi; that all persons found with arms in their hands north of these lines should be tried by court-martial, and if guilty, should be shot; and that "the property, real and personal, of all persons in the state of Missouri directly proven to have taken an active part with their enemies in the field is declared to be confiscated to the public use, and their slaves, if any they have, are hereby declared freemen." His intention was to penalize the disloyal slave owners of northern and central Missouri who were organizing or supporting the guerrilla warfare of those regions. But his action had a far wider significance. The conflict had thus far been a war to preserve the Union, and no member of the Administration and no general had suggested any other object; the effect of Frémont's proclamation, if sustained and its principles applied in other fields, would be to convert it into a war to liberate the slaves.



MAJOR-GENERAL STERLING PRICE



MAJOR-GENERAL DAVID HUNTER



LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LEONIDAS POLK



ADJUTANT-GENERAL
LORENZO THOMAS

Four Figures of the "Hundred Days"

Already many radical-minded Northerners, including of course the Abolitionists, had demanded just this. Gerrit Smith, in an open letter to Frémont's staff assistant, Owen Lovejoy,¹ dated July 12, had said that the Government was right to call for millions in money and hundreds of thousands of soldiers if they were really needed to put down the rebellion. "But why take a costly and weary way to put it down," he asked, "when a cheap and short one is at hand? Why choose crushing burdens of debt and immense human slaughter when both can be avoided? The liberation of the slaves has obviously become one of the necessities and therefore one of the rights of the country. Let the President, in his capacity as commander of the army, proclaim such liberation and the war would end in thirty days." Moncure D. Conway was putting through the press a book, received enthusiastically by the newspapers and by Senator Sumner, entitled "The Great Method of Peace," which declared that emancipation was the master key of victory. Announce it, he wrote and "every Southerner would have to hurry home to be his own home-guard and his own home-provisioner." Even those who had no such illusions thought, as the *Tribune* said, that it was "time to be in earnest; that handling traitors with kid gloves is not the way to subdue them."²

Frémont's proclamation of August 30, therefore, coming at this moment of growing antagonism between

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, July 23, 1861.

² *N. Y. Tribune*, Sept. 1, 1861.

radical and conservative Northerners, and his action immediately afterward in setting up a commission to take evidence and in issuing deeds of manumission to slaves, fell upon the country like a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER XXXI

FRANK BLAIR AND PRESIDENT LINCOLN

THE most remarkable fact regarding Frémont's proclamation—a fact which has never been sufficiently emphasized—is that he had thought little, if at all, of its effect outside of Missouri. He has been accused by Nicolay and Hay of drafting it as an appeal to the support of the northern radicals, and as a last desperate attempt to regain the popularity which he had lost through Lyon's defeat. This is cruelly unjust, and it also attributes to the impetuous General a measure of shrewd, scheming calculation which he never possessed. He planned the proclamation simply as a weapon against the guerrillas who were laying northern Missouri waste; he designed it, as he said, "to place in the hands of the military authorities the power to give instantaneous effect to existing laws, and to supply such deficiencies as the conditions of war demand." It may seem extraordinary, though it was in fact characteristic, that he did not wait to consult the Administration on so momentous a step; had he paused to think of its effect outside the bounds of his own Department, he would have been more likely to do so.

He was warned, as he read it to his wife and friend in that gray August dawn, that Washington would be

hostile. "General," said Edward Davis, "Mr. Seward will never allow this. He intends to wear down the South by steady pressure, not by blows, and then make himself the arbitrator." "It is for the North to say what it will or will not allow," replied Frémont, "and whether it will arbitrate, or whether it will fight. The time has come for decisive action; this is a war measure, and as such I make it. I have been given full power to crush rebellion in this department, and I will bring the penalties of rebellion home to every man found striving against the Union."¹

The reception of the proclamation has been often described, and it is sufficient to say that it aroused the enthusiasm of all the radical antislavery elements in the North as nothing had done since the firing on Fort Sumter. New England was jubilant. From all parts of the Middle West came reports that men were saying, "Now the administration is in earnest," or "That looks like work!"² In Illinois, Lincoln's own state, the outburst of applause was such as to give the President genuine pain. The German-Americans rose *en masse* to this new and higher object which Frémont seemed to have given the War, and recruiting increased by a sudden leap. The press of the North was almost a unit in warm commendation. In Chicago, the *Tribune*; in Boston, the *Post*; and in New York, the *Times* of Henry J. Raymond, the *Tribune* of Horace Greeley,

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² *Chase MSS.*

and the *Evening Post* of William Cullen Bryant, all praised the proclamation in high terms. Even James Gordon Bennett's *Herald*, which had lately been on the side of the South, and the *Chicago Times*, which was at one time briefly suppressed as a copperhead organ, joined in the chorus of approbation. George Julian, an Indiana member of Congress, wrote that "it stirred and united the people of the loyal States during the ten days of life allotted it by the Government far more than any other event of the war." Perhaps the most extraordinary fact was that Simon Cameron, the secretary of war, who was at his home ill, thought it an admirable stroke, and telegraphing his congratulations to Frémont, returned to his desk ready to give it his hearty endorsement.¹ He was surprised to find that Lincoln was hostile. Sumner was enthusiastic. From that moment, Frémont became more than a general—to millions, especially in New England and among the German and Yankee elements of the West, he became a symbol. His name represented the crusade for the extinction of slavery.

How Lincoln, with his usual calm sagacity, took a different and wiser view; how, with the necessity of conciliating the hesitant Kentuckians in mind, he patiently and kindly asked Frémont to modify his proclamation—this, too, is an old story. His letter to the General is worth quoting in full:²

¹ Simon Cameron, *Congressional Globe*, June 1, 1870.

² Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, Ch. 24.

Washington, D. C., Sept. 2, 1861.

Major-General Frémont,

MY DEAR SIR: Two points in your proclamation of August 30 give me some anxiety:

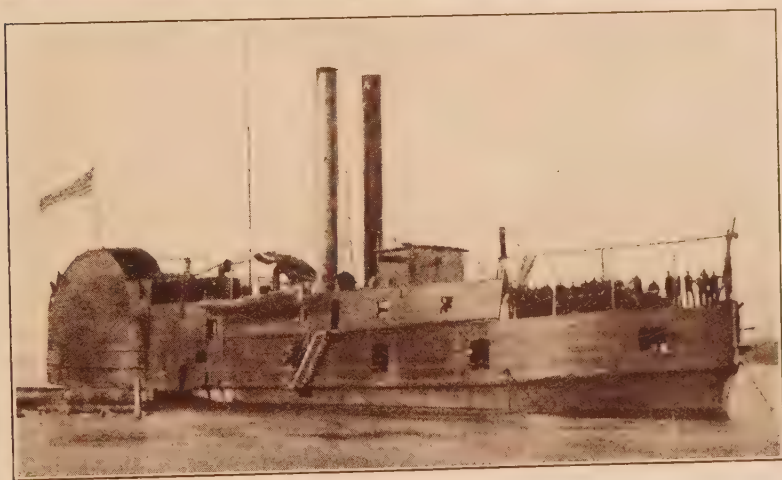
First. Should you shoot a man, according to the proclamation, the Confederates would very certainly shoot our best men in their hands in retaliation; and so, man for man, indefinitely. It is, therefore, my order that you allow no man to be shot under the proclamation without first having my approbation or consent.

Second. I think there is great danger that the closing paragraph, in relation to the confiscation of property and the liberating slaves of traitorous owners, will alarm our Southern Union friends and turn them against us; perhaps ruin our rather fair prospect for Kentucky. Allow me, therefore, to ask that you will, as of your own motion, modify that paragraph so as to conform to the first and fourth sections of the act of Congress entitled, "An act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes," approved August 6, 1861, and a copy of which act I herewith send you.

This letter is written in a spirit of caution, and not of censure. I send it by special messenger, in order that it may certainly and speedily reach you.

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln.



CIVIL WAR STEAMBOATS

(Vessels such as Frémont, Fiala, and Eads placed in commission on the Mississippi. The three at the top are transports. That at the bottom is a small gunboat.)

This request for a modification Frémont indiscreetly refused. His eyes were bent wholly upon Missouri, without thought of the other border states, and he tells us in his unpublished memoirs that the effect there was at once striking. "The Union people rejoiced openly. The class of sympathizers with the South became quiet and careful, finding that they must respect the laws of the land they lived in. To the rebels everywhere it was a blow. It affected not only their principles but their property." He wrote to Lincoln a somewhat stubborn explanation:¹

Trusting to have your confidence, I have been leaving it to events themselves to show you whether or not I was shaping affairs here according to your ideas. The shortest communication between Washington and St. Louis generally involves two days, and the employment of two days in time of war goes largely toward success or disaster. I therefore went along according to my own judgment, leaving the result of my movements to justify me with you. And so in regard to my proclamation of the 30th. Between the rebel armies, the Provisional Government, and home traitors, I felt the position bad and saw danger. In the night I decided upon the proclamation and the form of it. I wrote it the next morning and printed it the same day. I did it without consultation or advice with any one, acting solely with my best judgment to

¹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 477.

serve the country and yourself, and perfectly willing to receive the amount of censure which should be thought due if I had made a false movement. This is as much a movement in the war as a battle, and in going into these I shall have to act according to my judgment of the ground before me, as I did on this occasion. If, upon reflection, your better judgment still decides that I am wrong in the article respecting the liberation of slaves, I have to ask that you will openly direct me to make the correction. The implied censure will be received as a soldier always should the reprimand of his chief. If I were to retract of my own accord, it would imply that I myself thought it wrong, and that I had acted without the reflection which the gravity of the point demanded. But I did not. I acted with full deliberation, and upon the certain conviction that it was a measure right and necessary, and I think so still. In regard to the other point of the proclamation to which you refer, I desire to say that I do not think the enemy can either misconstrue or urge anything against it, or undertake to make unusual retaliation. The shooting of men who will rise in arms against an army in the military occupation of a country is merely a necessary measure of defence, and entirely according to the usages of civilized warfare. The article does not at all refer to prisoners of war, and certainly our enemies have no ground for re-

quiring that we should waive in their benefit any of the ordinary advantages which the usages of war allow to us.

Already Frémont had become involved in a correspondence with the Confederate commander regarding the interpretation of his article upon the shooting of prisoners. On receipt of Frémont's dispatch, Lincoln in a courteous letter made an open order for the modification:

Sir: Yours of the 8th in answer to mine of the 2d instant is just received. Assuming that you, upon the ground, could better judge of the necessities of your position than I could at this distance, on seeing your proclamation of August 30 I perceived no general objection to it. The particular clause, however, in relation to the confiscation of property and the liberation of slaves appeared to me to be objectionable in its non-conformity to the act of Congress passed the 6th of August last upon the same subjects; and hence I wrote you, expressing my wish that that clause should be modified accordingly. Your answer, just received, expresses the preference on your part that I should make an open order for the modification, which I very cheerfully do. It is therefore ordered that the said clause of said proclamation be so modified, held, and construed as to conform to, and not to transcend, the provisions on the same subject contained in the

act of Congress entitled, "An act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes," approved August 6, 1861, and that said act be published at length, with this order.

Your obedient servant,

A. Lincoln.

The news was received by many in the North with gnashing of teeth. Judge Hoadly of Cincinnati wrote that the prevalent sentiment in his city could be described only by the word "fury."¹ "How many times," asked James Russell Lowell, "are we to save Kentucky and lose our self-respect?"

This rebuke by the President in the sight of the nation was but the first of a series of disasters which befell Frémont. The next and the most catastrophic was an immediate estrangement between him and the powerful Blair family. The Blairs, as Lincoln later told some friends in a confidential chat, were a proud clan, with the spirit of a close corporation, and with a tendency to go in a headlong rush for any object.² They were related to the Bentons through the Preston family of Virginia, and they and the Frémonts had been almost lifelong friends. The two sons, Montgomery and Frank, had gone to Missouri to have the benefit of Senator Benton's influence in practicing law; while Jessie had spent much time with the "old gentleman," Francis P. Blair, on his attractive estate at Silver

¹ Chase MSS.

² Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, Ch. 24.

Springs, just across the Maryland line, whither he had retired with his slaves, dogs, and books. To this place, with its groves and grottoes, she had brought her second baby daughter in 1853 to die. Lincoln later testified that he had appointed Frémont as western commander at the earnest solicitation of the Blairs, and that he was their "pet and protégé." There seemed every reason for complete harmony. Yet there ensued a swift and angry breach—a breach which disrupted the Unionists of Missouri, and shook the whole Northwest.

The reasons for the duel in which Frémont and the Blairs engaged, with political results that tormented the Lincoln Administration till the last year of the War, were complex but by no means obscure. Temperamentally, the men were certain to clash. Frank Blair had taken the helm in Missouri, and was the pride and hope of the family. He was shrewd, direct, practical, and aggressive,¹ and the erratic, impetuous, visionary traits of Frémont grated upon him. Both were hot-tempered and tenacious. Above all, Frank Blair expected to continue to be the directing force in Missouri affairs, while Frémont had no intention of letting anybody dominate them but himself. Already the Blair clan had shown what it would do with any commander who crossed its path in that state. A few months earlier, it had taken General William S. Harney in hand because he seemed slow and conservative, and had broken him upon the wheel with cruel dispatch. Frank Blair

¹ For a sketch of Blair, see G. W. Nichols, *Story of the Great March*, 97 ff.

had pulled all the wires he could in Missouri; his brother the Postmaster-General, "the Pisistratus of his race," had exerted pressure at the capital; and Harney had been ignominiously removed. Now Frank Blair desired to have his wishes treated as something like commands, and was chagrined and angry when Frémont, with Jessie at his back, followed his own course. Missouri had shown signs of becoming a little political enclave of the Blairs; it dismayed them to see Frémont taking steps which rallied the Germans at his back and which looked like the erection of a possible machine of his own.

For a time after Frémont's arrival in St. Louis, all had gone with fair smoothness. Montgomery Blair supported Frémont as best he could in Washington. He encouraged the General in his expenditures, and criticized the secretary of the treasury for his parsimonious ways—"Chase," he wrote, "has more horror of seeing Treasury notes below par than of seeing soldiers killed." He talked with Lincoln about Frémont's needs, and criticized Lincoln, too—"he is of the Whig school, and that brings him naturally not only to incline to the feeble policy of the Whigs, but to give his confidence to such advisers."¹ Frank Blair was much at Frémont's headquarters, and asked and received not a few favors. Among others, he requested consideration, in the letting of contracts, for his own friends among the important merchants and manufacturers of St. Louis. This con-

¹ *Report, Committee on Conduct of the War, Part III, 115 ff.*



THREE PICTURES OF FRANK P. BLAIR

(With mustache, before the Civil War; bearded, as a general with Sherman; clean-shaven, after the war. All from photographs.)

sideration was cheerfully granted. But the time came when Frémont denied some of Blair's requests. The two crossed swords on a contract which Blair had promised to an influential friend, and which Frémont, after approving, had reduced by various cancellations.¹ It seemed to Blair that the General was not giving his patronage to the right men—that he was giving it to former California friends and others whom Blair characterized as “obscene birds of prey.” He wrote east, and his father at once took a hand. The old gentleman sent a decidedly irritated letter to Frémont. He suggested “a copartnership in the West,” and said that he and his sons would do everything in their power to aid the commander if, on his part, he would be obliging to them. Frank, he added, wanted a new military post:²

I shall expect you to exert your utmost influence to carry my points, and now to begin, I want to have Frank made a militia major-general for the State of Missouri. This, I presume, Gov. Gamble can do, and as Major-General Frost nipped his military honors in the bud, by turning traitor and absconding with Jackson, it would seem but a completion of what was gained in substituting Gamble for the abdicating governor, to make Frank, as the military man of the State, take the position deserted by Gen. Frost. Frank might have

¹ *Report, Committee on Conduct of the War, Part III, 178 ff.; 202 ff.*

² *Frémont MSS.*

accepted a generalship, offered him by Lincoln, but he felt that he might be useful in Congress and hence declined a commission from that quarter, which would have vacated his seat in the House. He has no commission now and acts only as colonel by the election of the regiment and courtesy of the army.

Frémont felt unable to grant this unblushing demand and said so. He tried to soften the refusal by writing the Blairs that Frank's regiment would amount to a brigade, but the rebuff stung them. Actually, he hoped that Frank Blair would accept a command in the East and so cease to complicate the Missouri situation.¹ But the elder Blair continued to insist, by letters and telegrams, that Frémont yield to and coöperate with his son. He believed that Frank was on the high road to the Presidency, and he was determined that nothing should check his son's promising career. Montgomery also thought that Frank was, as Gideon Welles records, "the greatest man in the country." All the ambitions and the wishes of the family were concentrated upon the young man. As Lincoln shrewdly put it, "Frank is their hope and pride."²

In so far as they were motivated by political intrigue and a desire for personal favors, the Blairs appear to poor advantage in their attack on Frémont; but there was a better side. Frank Blair came honestly to

¹ *MS. Memoirs*.

² Gideon Welles, *Diary*, III, 408; Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 414.

believe that Frémont lacked the high military talents his position required. He thought that St. Louis was overwhelmingly loyal, and objected to the measures which Frémont and McKinstry took to police it under martial law. Later, he declared that Frémont's acts were "the offspring of timidity, seeking to prevent imaginary dangers by inspiring the terrors with which he himself was haunted." There was room for a sincere divergence of opinion upon this policing, and it is not easy to say which man was right. Most merchants were sympathetic with secession, and even after Frémont's work was done, the secessionist candidates for officers of the Chamber of Commerce and the Mercantile Library Association, two powerful organizations, were elected by heavy majorities.¹ Frémont's force of effective troops was much smaller than it appeared to be, and he knew that he might have to denude the city of men to answer some urgent call from the East or the West. On the whole, his precautions appear to have been justified.

Again, Blair condemned the fortification of St. Louis as another evidence of the same wasteful timidity, and as a step both useless and in its execution needlessly extravagant. These defensive works included ten forts, and the labor on them was prosecuted until the middle of October, when the War Department ordered them dropped. But here again Frémont had much justification. There seemed genuine need in July and August, 1861, for protective measures of this character, and the

¹ *Congressional Globe*, March 7, 1862.

sums expended were comparatively insignificant—about \$300,000 in all. It was a small amount compared with the money spent upon the fortification of Washington.

The defeat and death of Lyon, a close friend, was a severe shock to Frank Blair, and in itself raised a doubt in his mind of Frémont's capacity. Lincoln tells us that at first he spoke of Frémont with high admiration and warm hopes for the future. "But at last," said Lincoln, "the tone of Frank's letter changed. It was a change from confidence to doubt and uncertainty. They were pervaded with a tone of sincere sorrow and of fear that Frémont would fail." General John M. Schofield states that the change in Frank's attitude was manifest just after Lyon's defeat. Late in August, Schofield and Blair called together upon Frémont at the Brant mansion:¹

The general received me cordially, but, to my great surprise, no questions were asked, nor any mention made, of the bloody field from which I had just come, where Lyon had been killed . . . I was led at once to a large table on which maps were spread out, from which the general proceeded to explain at length the plans of the great campaign which he was then preparing. Col. Blair had, I believe, already been initiated, but I listened attentively for a long time, certainly more than an hour, to the elucidation of the project. In general outline the plan proposed a march of the main army

¹ J. M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army*, 48 ff.

of the West through southwestern Missouri and northwestern Arkansas to the valley of the Arkansas River, and thence down that river to the Mississippi. As soon as the explanation was ended, Col. Blair and I took our leave, making our exit through the same basement door through which we had entered. We walked down the street for some time in silence. Then Blair turned to me and said: "Well, what do you think of him?" I replied, in words rather too strong to repeat in print, to the effect that my opinion as to his wisdom was the same as it always had been. Blair said: "I have been suspecting that for some time."

It was a family maxim that: "When the Blairs go in for a fight, they go in for a funeral."¹ So it was this time. The quarrel was heated enough when Frémont issued his emancipation proclamation. That made it worse, for the Blair family took the President's view that it was necessary to conciliate the people of the border states, and to refrain from direct attacks upon slavery. Frank Blair when aroused had all the dour fury of his Scotch Covenanter blood. His letters shortly stirred up a hornets' nest in Washington. On the other side, Mrs. Frémont came to her husband's aid with all the bitterness and vigor she had inherited from her father. It was a duel to the death. When the smoke

¹ Cf. Edward C. Kirkland, *The Peacemakers of 1864*, 145; A. G. Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 287. It must be remembered, in interpreting Montgomery Blair's attitude toward such men as Gen. John Pope, that he himself had received a West Point training.

of battle cleared away, Frémont was a ruined man, and the political future of the Blairs was almost hopelessly blasted.

The first clear intimation the public had of this quarrel came early in September, when Lincoln dispatched two members of the Blair family, the Postmaster-General and his brother-in-law, Meigs, the Quartermaster-General, to St. Louis to make a thorough inquiry and a report, and also to give Frémont some friendly advice and admonition. They bore a letter from Lincoln to General David Hunter in Chicago. "General Frémont," wrote the President, "needs assistance which it is difficult to give him. He is losing the confidence of men near him, whose support any man in his position must have to be successful. His cardinal mistake is that he isolates himself, and allows nobody to see him; and by which he does not know what is going on in the very matter he is dealing with. He needs to have by his side a man of large experience. Will you not, for me, take that place?"¹ Montgomery Blair and Meigs arrived at St. Louis on September 12. Their friends gave it out that their purpose was to look after the overland mails, but this did not deceive anyone. Popular gossip at once decided, said the St. Louis correspondent of the *New York Herald*, that the Government was discontented "with the way General Frémont has expended money and made proclamations, while at the same time he does nothing in the way of getting the state into

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 413.

Federal possession.”¹ Frémont himself saw the handwriting on the wall, and later wrote:²

Early in September [1861], I began to feel the withdrawal of the confidence and support of the Administration. The visits of high officials charged with inquiry into the affairs of my department, and the simultaneous and sustained attacks of leading journals accumulated obstructions and disturbed my movements. In fact, my command virtually endured little over one month. But the measures which I had initiated had already taken enduring shape.

It was inevitable that Montgomery Blair, after talking with the embittered Frank and others who were thoroughly prejudiced against Frémont, should come back with an unfavorable report. He decided to his own satisfaction that the public weal required the removal of Frémont, and on his return he made this recommendation.³ Writing to Sumner, he declared that his brother was thoroughly aroused. “He (Frank) cannot tolerate trifling in a great cause,” he declared, “and when he discovered that Frémont was a mere trifter, he was not to be reconciled to seeing the State overrun by pro-slavery myrmidons, by an empty proclamation threatening to deprive them of their negroes.” Nothing could have been more unfair than to call Frémont

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Sept. 18, 1861.

² *Undated MS.*

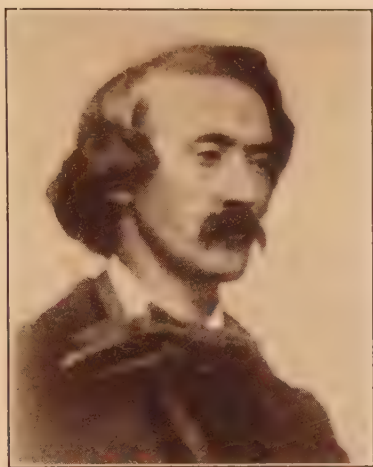
³ See *Report*, Committee on Conduct of the War, Part III, 170.

"a mere trifle," and yet this was the impression of him which the Blairs were doing all in their power to diffuse in St. Louis and Washington.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Frémont, angry and overwrought, had set off for the East bearing the General's additional and secret reply to Lincoln's note upon his proclamation. She had determined to seek a special interview with the President, defend her husband, and denounce his accusers. It would have been better if she had stayed at home, for she was destined to do infinitely more harm than good, but she was never a woman to be held back. She started on September 8, taking her English maid, and sitting two days and two nights in the hot, overcrowded train. At the end of the third day, she reached Washington and went to the Willard Hotel to meet some friends from New York.

As to the exact character of her interview with Lincoln, we have two varying accounts by the two participants. The President, in an informal conversation with some friends more than two years afterward, recorded by one of his secretaries, stated that: "She sought an audience with me at midnight, and tasked me so violently with many things, that I had to exercise all the awkward tact I have to avoid quarreling with her. She surprised me by asking why their enemy, Montgomery Blair, had been sent to Missouri. She more than once intimated that if General Frémont should decide to try conclusions with me, he could set up for himself." ¹

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, Ch. 24.



BRIGADIER-GENERAL JAMES A.
MULLIGAN



BRIGADIER-GENERAL NATHANIEL LYON



MAJOR-GENERAL FRANZ SIGEL



MAJOR-GENERAL JEFFERSON C. DAVIS

FOUR OF FRÉMONT'S SUBORDINATES IN MISSOURI

Mrs. Frémont's story differs in essential particulars from this. Her narrative is probably more accurate than Lincoln's casual conversation, some two years after the event, casually jotted down later by John Hay, for the interview must have been burned deep into her retentive memory. She writes:¹

I went for Gen. Frémont to Washington to give his letter into President Lincoln's hands—both of us doubted its reaching him in the usual way.

I got in at the end of the day, tired, for I had travelled night and day from St. Louis in an ordinary car, and at once sent my card (from Willard's Hotel) with a written request to know when I might deliver the letter to the President.

The messenger brought back a card on which was written, "Now, at once, A. Lincoln."

It was nearly 9 p.m., the date September 10 [1861].

As I had not been able to undress or lie down since leaving St. Louis I had intended taking a bath and going to bed at once. But I walked over immediately, just as I had been for two days and nights, in my dusty black mourning dress.

Judge Edward Coles of New York city was with me.

We were asked into the usual receiving room, the red room, next the large dining room. After some little waiting the President came in from that

¹ *Undated MS.*

dining room by the further door, leaving the door partly open. As he crossed the room that door was still more widely set open.

I introduced Judge Coles, who then stepped into the deep doorway leading to the blue room—we were just by it—and there he remained walking to and fro, keeping in sight and hearing, just within the range of the doorway. For he was struck at once, as I was, by the President's manner, which was hard—and the first tones of his voice were repelling. Nor did he offer me a seat. He talked standing, and both voice and manner made the impression that I was to be got rid of briefly.

I often told over this interview to friends. It was clear to Judge Coles as to myself that the President's mind was made up against General Frémont—and decidedly against *me*. It would be too long to give you fuller detail. Briefly, in answer to his "Well?" I explained that the general wished so much to have his attention to the letter sent, that I had brought it to make sure it would reach him. He answered, not to that, but to the subject his own mind was upon, that "*It was a war for a great national idea, the Union, and that General Frémont should not have dragged the negro into it,—that he never would if he had consulted with Frank Blair. I sent Frank there to advise him.*" The words italicized are exactly those of the President.

He first mentioned the Blairs, in this astonishing connection.

It was a *parti pris*, and as we walked back Judge Coles, who heard everything, said to me, "This ends Frémont's part in the war. Seward and Montgomery Blair will see to that, and Lincoln does not seem to see the injustice, the wrong of receiving secret reports against him made by a man authorized to do so, and as everyone knows, with his mind often clouded by drink and always governed by personal motives."

The President said he would *send me his answer the next day*.

The next day passed and nothing came from him. But Mr. Blair, Sr., came and told me many things. I had known him always and liked him, though Mr. Frémont did not. He was *very* angry with me for not letting Montgomery "manage things." He talked angrily and freely, as was natural to one who had grown up to defer to him, and in his excitement uncovered the intentions of the Administration regarding the protection of slavery.

That caused me to write note number two to the President. The originals of these must have been in possession of the secretaries. I have the copies which I kept for Gen. Frémont. I confined my request to asking for the promised letter, and for copies of the charges against Mr. Frémont.

In the President's answer he says "not hearing from me," he had sent the answer by mail and declined to give letters without consent of owners. Yet he acted on them injuriously to the reputation of Gen. Frémont.

I did not risk a direct telegram to Gen. Frémont, but through my English maid I sent a cipher telegram in her name to an operator at headquarters, a man we could trust, and in that way the general was warned against being trapped into any steps aimed at by a show of "friendship" from Postmaster-General Blair. I returned immediately to St. Louis and found him working to "modify" and reshape the General's course—but he had been listened to only, and my arrival ended all attempts at concealing their real conduct. I did not speak to him then, or ever again.

In a later document, the unpublished biographical memoir of the explorer written by his wife and son, Mrs. Frémont adds some significant details to this brief narrative.¹ She states that when she handed the President the General's letter, "he smiled with an expression that was not agreeable," and stood under the chandelier to read it. Meanwhile, trembling with fatigue, she sat down uninvited. When he had finished the missive, the President told her that he had already written the General, and that he knew what the Administration wished done. To this she replied that Frémont thought

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

it would be well if Mr. Lincoln explained personally his ideas and desires, for "the General feels he is at the great disadvantage of being perhaps opposed by people in whom you have every confidence." Lincoln was a little startled. "What do you mean? Persons of different views?" he inquired. Thereupon Mrs. Frémont began to talk about the difficulty of conquering by arms alone, and the necessity of appealing to the sentiment of England and other nations by a blow against slavery; expressing ideas that had certainly not been in Frémont's head when he issued his proclamation as an effort to intimidate the farmer-guerrillas of northern Missouri. Apparently nettled, the President said, in what she thought a sneering tone, "You are quite a female politician." He at once went on to speak vehemently of Frémont's mistake in bringing the negro into the War.

Mrs. Frémont also writes that when old Mr. Blair came to see her early the next day, he grew very heated. "Well," he said, "who would have expected you to do such a thing as this, to come here and find fault with the President? Look what you have done for Frémont; you have made the President his enemy."¹ The old editor, saying that Montgomery would talk with Frémont "and bring him to his senses," gave her to understand that five days earlier Lincoln had received from Frank Blair a letter containing various charges against Frémont; and that it was because of this letter

¹ Uncorrected script of *MS. Memoirs*.

that the Postmaster-General had been sent to St. Louis to make an examination. As she has related, she asked Lincoln in "note number two" for a copy of these charges. The President's reply was brief:

It is not exactly correct, as you say you were told by the elder Mr. Blair, to say that I sent Postmaster-General Blair to St. Louis to examine into that department and report. Postmaster-General Blair did go, with my approbation, to see and converse with Gen. Frémont as a friend. I do not feel authorized to furnish you with copies of letters in my possession, without the consent of the writers. No impression has been made on my mind against the honor or integrity of General Frémont, and I now enter my protest against being understood as acting in any hostility towards him.

The combined result of Mrs. Frémont's display of temper in Washington, and of Montgomery Blair's highly prejudiced report concerning affairs in St. Louis, was unquestionably to deepen the President's feeling that Frémont had been an unfortunate choice for the Western Department; but he still maintained an attitude of great patience. Meanwhile, Mrs. Frémont's burning resentment against the Blairs, and her feeling that her husband was being made the victim of an evil conspiracy, rendered her anything but a calm-minded and helpful assistant to the General at his headquarters. The quarrel became more bitter and vengeful than ever.

The military situation in the West had been developing rapidly but unevenly, and had now reached a point where in one quarter it offered the brightest hopes, while in another it threatened a second heavy disaster. The hopeful quarter was the Mississippi River theater near and below Cairo and Paducah. Two or three days before Mrs. Frémont set off for Washington, a new brigadier-general named Ulysses S. Grant marched into Paducah, Kentucky, at the mouth of the Tennessee River a short distance above Cairo, and took possession of this portal to a great waterway. He had acted in the nick of time, without orders from Frémont, for Polk was about to seize the town. Frémont does deserve credit, however, for placing Grant in command of the troops of southeastern Missouri and southern Illinois, the region where the great campaign to open up the Mississippi was certain to develop. We are told by Frémont that he chose Grant for this key position, when other men near him would have sent General John Pope, and against the advice of various regular officers at headquarters, because he had discerned the man's unusual qualities.¹ "I believed him to be a man of great activity and of promptness in obeying orders without question or hesitation. For that reason I gave General Grant this important command at this critical period. I did not then consider him a great general, for the qualities which led him to success had not had the opportunity for their development. I selected him for qualities I

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

could not then find combined in any other man, for General Grant was a man of unassuming character, not given to self-elation, of dogged persistence and of iron will." Grant had with him the able John A. Rawlins.

A great part of Frémont's troops were now disposed in this quarter, and he looked forward to a rapid movement down the river. The letter he sent to Lincoln by Mrs. Frémont was an outline of this plan, and shows a genuine comprehension of the strategic situation:¹

I ask your attention to the position of affairs in Kentucky. As the rebel troops driven out from Missouri had invaded Kentucky in considerable force, and by occupying Union City, Hickman, and Columbus, were preparing to seize Paducah and attack Cairo, I judged it impossible, without losing important advantages, to defer any longer a forward movement. For this purpose I have drawn from the Missouri side a part of the force which had been stationed at Bird's Point, Cairo, and Cape Girardeau, to Fort Holt and Paducah, of which places we have taken possession. As the rebel forces outnumber ours, and the counties of Kentucky, between the Mississippi and Tennessee Rivers, as well as those along the latter and the Cumberland, are strongly secessionist, it becomes imperatively necessary to have the coöperation of the loyal Union forces under Generals Anderson

¹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 478.

and Nelson, as well as of those already encamped opposite Louisville, under Colonel Rousseau.

I have reinforced, yesterday, Paducah with two regiments, and will continue to strengthen the position with men and artillery. As soon as Gen. Smith, who commands there, is reinforced sufficiently to enable him to spread his forces, he will have to take and hold Mayfield and Lovelaceville, controlling in this way the mouths of both the Tennessee and the Cumberland Rivers.

Meanwhile Gen. Grant would take possession of the entire Cairo and Fulton Railroad, Piketown, New Madrid, and the shore of the Mississippi opposite Hickman and Columbus. The foregoing disposition having been effected, a combined attack will be made upon Columbus, and, if successful in that, upon Hickman, while Rousseau and Nelson will move in concert by railroad, to Nashville, Tenn., occupying the State capital, and, with an adequate force, New Providence.

The conclusion of this movement would be a combined advance toward Memphis, on the Mississippi, as well as the Memphis and Ohio Railroad, and I trust the result would be a glorious one to the country.

But while the prospects in this quarter looked so bright, in northwest Missouri another defeat was imminent. Here Colonel Mulligan, with the Chicago Irish

brigade and some other troops, 2,800 in all, had just taken up a position at the town of Lexington, on the Missouri River. A greatly superior Confederate army under General Sterling Price was advancing upon him from southwestern Missouri, where the battle of Wilson's Creek had caused the enlistment of many rebel volunteers. Mulligan appealed desperately for reinforcements, and labored frenziedly in gathering munitions and forage and entrenching himself. On September 18th, Price began his attack. The result was never in doubt, and though the Irish soldiers made a gallant defence, on the 20th the Union forces, their water supply cut off, were compelled to surrender. It was an even more stinging humiliation for the North than the defeat of Lyon. For several days, the fate of Lexington had been uncertain, and the newspapers had reported every step in the drama to a nation anxiously awaiting the final news. When it was realized that an army had been lost, and that eight guns with invaluable stores had fallen into the Southern hands, a tremendous cry of indignation went up.

The Missouri River, though low at that season, was open. It seemed feasible to send Federal troops up it by steamboat. There were Union detachments at various points in northern Missouri, some within short marching distance. Why, men demanded, did not Frémont hurry reinforcements to Lexington in time?

In actual fact, Frémont was by no means so blameworthy as he seemed, and was again largely the victim



BATTLE OF LEXINGTON, MISSOURI, SEPTEMBER, 1861

(Shows the Union forces entrenched about the college and its boarding-house and attacked by Price from the surrounding hills, ravines, and buildings. From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.)

of circumstances. His Department was still poor in properly trained men. It happened that Schuyler Colfax arrived in St. Louis on September 14, when the whole city was excited by the news that Price was marching on the brave force at Lexington. Colfax hurried to Frémont's headquarters, and asked him if he could not send troops to the rescue. The general replied: "Mr. Colfax, I will tell you, confidentially, how many men we have in St. Louis, though I would not have it published on the streets for my life. The opinion in the city is that we have 20,000 men here, and this gives us strength. If it were known here what was the actual number, our enemies would be promptly informed." He rang for the muster rolls, and Colfax read them. They showed that there were in and about the city 6,890 men, home guards and all; and of this force there were only two full regiments, the remainder being fragmentary and undisciplined forces of from 250 to 600 men. "This," said Colfax, "is not really enough for the proper defense of St. Louis; but even so, couldn't you spare some for the emergency?" He tells us that tears stood in Frémont's eyes as the General handed him two telegrams.

One telegram was from Secretary of War Cameron, dated September 14, and it stated that the President had determined to call upon him for "five thousand well-armed infantry, to be sent here without a moment's delay." The other was from Winfield Scott of the same date. "Detach five thousand infantry from your de-

partment, to come here without delay," it ordered, "and report the number of troops that will be left with you. The President dictates." Colfax asked Frémont if he could not expostulate with the Government. "No," said he, "that would be insubordination, with which I have already been unjustly charged. The capital must be again in danger, and must be saved, even if Missouri fall and I sacrifice myself."¹

Frémont hurriedly telegraphed to Governor Morton of Indiana and Governor Dennison of Ohio for help, and both replied that they were under orders to send all available troops to the East. He sent orders on September 13 and 14 to General Pope at Palmyra, General Sturgis at Mexico, and General Jefferson C. Davis at Jefferson City, to march troops at once to the relief of Lexington.² Pope in reply promised that by the 18th he would have two full regiments of infantry, one hundred and fifty cavalry, and four pieces of artillery in the threatened town, and that by the 19th he would have 4,000 soldiers there. Yet none of them arrived. Jefferson C. Davis set out, but let his troops fire into each other in the darkness, and failed to reach his objective. Sturgis came within a few miles of the river on the bank opposite Lexington, and then upon hearing of Price's overwhelming force, timidly and inexcusably retired, though if he had gone on he would probably have turned the day. In a word, every-

¹ *Congressional Globe*, March 7, 1862, p. 1128.

² *Frémont Order-Book*.

thing went wrong, and Frémont was left to shoulder the blame for other men's failures.

It was now a perfect storm of blame and abuse that the General was facing, and only the fervent faith of great masses of Northern haters of slavery in his earnestness and ability enabled him to continue his work. The *St. Louis Evening News* assailed Frémont so bitterly that he suppressed it for a day and arrested its proprietor—a very indiscreet step, for which friendly newspapers in the East properly criticized him. A malignant letter appeared in the *National Intelligencer*, asking why with his 60,000 “splendidly equipped” soldiers, “the very élite of the West,” he did not drive the half-naked and poorly armed rebels out of the state.¹ Signed “A Missourian,” it bore every evidence of coming from Frank Blair, and was reprinted all over the North. Dispatches from Washington declared that the President and the Cabinet were “amazed” that Frémont had failed to relieve Mulligan.² Exaggerated stories of the extravagance in his Department passed from mouth to mouth. His enemies sneered over an order for 500 tons of ice which he had written, and talked of the sherry cobbles which he and his officers expected to enjoy; when the ice was really supplied on a requisition from the surgical staff, and was to be used in the western hospitals. He was accused of surrounding himself with a set of sharpers and adventurers

¹ Cf. *N. Y. Herald*, Sept. 21, 1861.

² *N. Y. Herald*, *N. Y. Tribune*, Sept. 23, 24, 1861.

from California, and of winking at their thievery. Worst of all, Frank Blair and others gave currency to the report that he was thinking of a western military republic, similar to that which Sam Houston had set up in Texas. It was a ridiculous charge, but it found believers.¹

At this juncture, in the middle of September, Frémont suddenly caused great excitement in St. Louis by placing Frank Blair under arrest. He telegraphed Secretary Cameron that "information of such positive character has come to my knowledge, implicating Col. F. P. Blair, Jr., 1st Missouri Volunteers, in insidious and dishonorable efforts to bring my authority into contempt with the government, and to undermine my influence as an officer, that I have ordered him in arrest, and shall submit charges to you for his trial."² The hatred between the two men was now intense. Neither would listen to reason regarding the other. Blair sincerely believed that Frémont was an incompetent and wasteful trifler, and that his retention in authority endangered the whole West. Frémont, for his part, sincerely believed that Blair was a designing scoundrel, who was under the influence of liquor a great part of the time, and basely selfish all of the time. He and Mrs. Frémont attributed Blair's conduct to anger because Frémont had courageously refused improper requests made by him or in his behalf. They state in their manu-

¹ See Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II, Ch. 24, for Dr. Emil Preetorius' angry statement on this charge; he pronounces Frémont "a patriot and a most unselfish man."

² *MS. Memoirs.*

script memoirs that Blair had early brought two of his friends to the General, and demanded that they be given a contract for supplying 40,000 men with clothing and other equipment, although a supply of such magnitude was not necessary at that time, and it was not desirable to place so large an order in the hands of one firm. They believed he was willing to wreck the Union cause to satisfy his private designs and grudges.

Thus did two leaders, laboring strenuously in the same cause and each animated by the highest purposes, regard one another as virtual traitors. Blair had long possessed an enthusiastic following in Missouri. Frémont was almost idolized by many of the Germans and by his own radical coterie. The quarrel divided the Unionists of the state into two glowering factions, and went far toward paralyzing their activities in the war. Blair was, of course, soon released from arrest; and to answer many lurid rumors, he printed a letter in the *St. Louis Republican* declaring that the dispute was not personal, but related only to public business.¹ The animosity between the two groups, however, showed no abatement, and it was evident that the drama was approaching its dénouement.

¹ See *N. Y. Herald*, Sept. 28, 1861.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE END OF THE "HUNDRED DAYS"

THE first summer of the War was passing into autumn; McClellan was still drilling his Army of the Potomac, still sneering at the Administration in letters to his wife, still timidly exaggerating the forces of the enemy; Secretary Cameron was rapidly and steadily losing the confidence of intelligent observers; and northerners looked back upon a series of defeats—Bull Run, Ball's Bluff, Wilson's Creek, Lexington—with scarcely a victory to counterbalance them. The nation was stirring restively and beginning to demand that the Administration give it commanders who would move forward and win victories. To this demand, McClellan was deaf; while Frémont, with a comparatively weaker and much more poorly equipped force, was necessarily keenly aware of it. He was working night and day under a sword of Damocles, and he knew that within a few weeks the thread which sustained it would probably break. He had but one hope. Before those weeks expired, he must win a victory which would restore his prestige and cause the Administration to stay its hand.

Frémont had realized this fact at once when Lexington fell. Reporting the disaster to Winfield Scott, he

added in an effort to forestall criticism: “I am taking the field myself, and hope to destroy the enemy, either before or after the junction of forces under McCulloch. Please notify the President immediately.” To this, General Scott replied that the President was glad to see him hastening to the scene of action; “his words are, ‘he expects you to repair the disaster at Lexington without loss of time.’”

Sterling Price, with his booty and prisoners, was retreating from Lexington to join McCulloch’s army in southwestern Missouri. Frémont at once reorganized his available troops in five divisions, and ordered the five commanders, Pope, McKinstry, Hunter, Sigel, and Asboth, to concentrate at once at Springfield, which was still held by the enemy. It was easy to give the order, but for the commanders to obey was a different matter. At once it became clear that the divisions were without adequate transportation, rations, uniforms, or munitions for a campaign. Congressman Gurley was frenziedly writing Lincoln on October 1 that the lack of supplies was scandalous and that if Frémont were not given men, money, and arms, even St. Louis might fall.

President Lincoln had now virtually made up his mind to remove Frémont, but with his usual patience he determined first to send Secretary Cameron, who had rather inclined to Frémont’s side, to make a personal inquiry. He gave Cameron an authorization to displace the General at once if he thought it expedient, but asked for careful action. The Secretary stopped in

St. Louis, talked with the Blair group, and near the middle of October reached the new field headquarters of Frémont at Tipton. He found everything in confusion, with the man badly in need of arms, ammunition, and clothing. "I had an interview with Gen. Frémont," he wrote the President on October 14, "and in conversation with him showed him an order for his removal. He was very much mortified, pained, and, I thought, humiliated. He made an earnest appeal to me, saying that he had come to Missouri, at the request of the Government, to assume a very responsible command, and that when he reached this state he found himself without troops and without any preparation for an army; that he had exerted himself, as he believed, with great energy, and now had around him a fine army, with everything to make success certain; that he was now in pursuit of his enemy, whom he believed were now within his reach; and that to recall him at this moment would not only destroy him, but render his whole expedition useless. In reply to this appeal, I told him that I would withhold the order until my return to Washington, giving him the interim to prove the reality of his hopes as to reaching and capturing the enemy, giving him to understand that, should he fail, he must give place to some other officer. He assured me that, should he fail, he would resign at once."¹ Cameron felt that he acted generously in not making the dismissal immediate. Both Pope and Hunter had expressed to him a highly un-

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 430.

favorable opinion of Frémont's capacities and acts, and both regarded the apparent plan of campaign with mystified surprise.

Frémont was now, indeed, in an agonizing position. Frank Blair was continuing his attacks with increasing bitterness. Released from arrest on September 24, 1861, at the request of his brother Montgomery, Blair had been stung by certain accompanying rebukes from Frémont. The general had accused him of using his family position to lay unsustained accusations, in private letters, before the President. At once, Blair published a letter to Adjutant-General Lorenzo Thomas.¹ He declared that he had committed no impropriety, “but have performed my simple duty to the government in the act to which the letter refers, which was, moreover, done at the instance of the President himself.” At the same time, he served notice that he would submit charges in official form, to be laid before the President as a basis for a court-martial of Frémont. For this letter and because he refused to resume his sword, as he was ordered, Frémont had Blair re-arrested. Just before leaving St. Louis for the field, the General poured out his pent-up feelings in a letter to a New York friend:²

I . . . send you this hurried note in the midst of the last arrangements before leaving.

We have to contend with an enemy having no

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Oct. 9, 1861.

² Published in *St. Louis Democrat*, Sept. 28, 1861.

posts to garrison and no lines of transportation to defend or guard, whose whole force can be turned at will to any one point, while we have from Leavenworth and from Fort Scott to Paducah to keep protected.

I wish to say to you that, though the position is difficult, I am competent to it, and also to meet the enemy in the field. I am not able at the same time to attend to the enemy at home. It is a shame to the country that an officer going to the field, his life in his hands, solely actuated by the desire to serve his country and win for himself its good opinions, with no other objects, should be destroyed by a system of concentrated attacks utterly without foundation. Charges are spoken of when there are none to be made. What is the object of the repetition of these falsehoods, except to familiarize the public mind to the idea that something is wrong? Already our credit, which was good, is shaken in consequence of the newspaper intimations of my being removed. Money is demanded by those furnishing supplies. To defend myself would require the time that is necessary to and belongs to my duty against the enemy. If permitted by the country, this state of things will not fail to bring on disorder. . . . My private character comes in only incidentally. I defend it because, naturally, his reputation is dear to any man; but only incidentally. This is the foundation of many

of my acts, and will be if I stay here. Everything that hurts, impedes, or embarrasses the work entrusted to me I strike at without hesitation. I take the consequences. The worst that can happen to me is relief from great labor.

The advance toward southwestern Missouri in pursuit of Price's retreating army lurched forward as rapidly as the unfavorable circumstances would allow. Frémont and his staff were at Jefferson City on September 27, 1861, and found a multitude of difficulties awaiting them at Camp Lilly, as the place had been named in honor of the General's daughter. A thousand wagons sent him from the East had proved to be made of rotten wood, and were breaking down everywhere on the roads and in the streets.¹ By October 7, all the troops which Frémont had been able to collect were on the road for Tipton, 160 miles from St. Louis, where they again paused. Rations were scanty, and sometimes the men were on half their proper allowance of food. Large herds of cattle had to be collected by foraging parties and tons of corn brought in to be ground at Frémont's portable mills. There was a dearth of horses and wagons, and the march, as one young aide said, was a continual "wait for the wagon."

Yet the obstacles were slowly overcome, and Frémont's hopes rose higher and higher. Writing to Jessie in St. Louis, he boasted that his men would emulate the fine marches of the California Battalion. "The army

¹ John R. Howard, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Ch. 19.

is in the best of spirits, and before we get through I will show you a little California practise, that is, if we are not interrupted." Dreams of a great and spectacular achievement floated before his eyes. He would scatter Price's army and push rapidly on south. "My plan is New Orleans straight," he wrote, "Foote to join on the river below. I think it can be done gloriously, especially if secrecy can be kept. . . . It would precipitate the war forward and end it soon and victoriously."¹

The middle of October found his steadily growing army under way for Warsaw on the Osage River, where the fleeing Price had burned the bridge behind him. Here a trained engineer, using men from the ranks, succeeded in stretching a pontoon bridge, 800 feet long, across the stream within thirty-six hours. Some of the lumber came from the demolition of old houses, but most of it was cut green in the neighboring woods. It was no sooner finished than the army was streaming forward again upon Springfield, the key to that section of the state and the city near which Lyon had met defeat two months earlier. The General had communicated his impossible dream to his men, and the watchword went about: "New Orleans and home again by summer!"²

Frémont paid little heed to obstacles in this march, and where horses and wagons were lacking, sent off into the country about for them. He had established supply

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *The Story of the Guard*, 72 ff., 85 ff.

² Jessie Benton Frémont, *The Story of the Guard*, 45, 46.



FRÉMONT'S TROOPS AT CAMP ZAGONI, WHEATLAND, MISSOURI, OCTOBER, 1861
(From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.)

depots with about a million rations at Tipton and two million at Jefferson City; but he was enough for a frontiersman to know how to subsist in large part on the country and to meet problems as they arose. Food taken from loyal citizens was paid for in government orders; that taken from secessionists was simply confiscated.¹ Most of his division commanders showed the same spirit and co-operated zealously in the advance. The glaring exception was John Pope, whose unexplained failure to reinforce Mulligan at Lexington, after promising to do so, still rankled in Frémont's mind. "Pope," said Frank Blair later, out of intimate knowledge, "is a braggart and a liar, with some courage, perhaps, but not much capacity."² Rising in time to high command, he made an utter botch of his brief campaign against Lee. He had done well in stamping out the guerrilla warfare in northern Missouri, but he now showed what can only be called a spirit of insubordination.

When Frémont ordered him to join in the forward movement, Pope wrote to Hunter that he was stupefied by the way in which the General ignored actual conditions. "There is not transportation enough," he said, "to move this army one hundred yards." He declared that there was no proper organization into brigades and divisions, and that there were no supply trains nor cavalry. These statements were partly inaccurate, and

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² Welles, *Diary*, I, 104, 119.

showed a disposition to magnify every possible objection. The ragged, ill-armed, ill-supplied Confederates, living on the country, found no difficulty in moving where they liked. Pope had caught the spirit of contempt for Frémont in certain St. Louis and Washington circles, and knew that powerful men would only too gladly support his recalcitrance. To Hunter, he wrote a few days later in a tone of sheer impudent scorn of his commander:¹

I received your note yesterday morning and I am really sorry I could not come down to see you before I left Syracuse. I am anxious to know the result of the Secretary's visit and its object. Upon his action on the subject, in my judgment, rests the safety of this command from great suffering. If we attempt to go south of the Osage without supplies for at least a month, and without much better preparation for everything than exists now, I do not believe that one half of these troops will ever return alive. The winter is coming on us. The men of this division are without overcoats, their clothes in rags, and only one blanket apiece; no provision trains or depots organized, and, so far as I can see, no object in view.

I shall, however, move from here and occupy the point designated, with five regiments, being all I can get anything like transportation for. I can, perhaps, carry eight or ten days' rations for the

¹ Frémont MSS., dated Oct. 18, 1861; of *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 527.

five regiments by making very short marches. . . .

Each division commander is left to himself. I don't know where to look for provisions short of St. Louis, or where for quartermaster or any other stores, short of the same place, neither do I know to whom I can apply for anything this side of St. Louis. I have written and telegraphed for 300,000 rations, as I intend to establish at Otterville a depot of provisions and of such stores as I can get for my own command. Altogether, this is the most remarkable campaign I ever saw, heard of or read of.

Frémont believed, upon the information of his scouts, that at a point a little beyond Springfield the Confederates would face about and give battle to him. There is indeed fairly complete evidence to sustain this view of their intentions. Price wrote to his superiors that:¹ “I am now falling back on Pineville, where Gen. McCulloch and myself have concluded to make a stand. Should the Federal forces advance from Springfield for the purpose of attacking us, we will act on the defensive, depending on the rugged nature of the country to compensate for any inequality in numbers. Our position will be so chosen that we will be able to make our artillery effective.” McCulloch also wrote that he had agreed with Price to fight a battle in Missouri, although the combined Confederate armies amounted only to about 17,000 men, and he feared the outcome. Pine-

¹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 731, 732.

ville is a county seat in the extreme southwestern corner of Missouri. But Pope, Hunter, and the Washington authorities, lacking Frémont's special information, felt almost certain that the Confederates would not pause until they were safe in the wilds of Arkansas, and that Frémont was conducting a wild-goose chase. To Pope, it seemed a criminal enterprise, and he declared:¹

When our forces have succeeded in reaching Neosho, or Arkansas itself, what is to be accomplished, or rather what does any sane man suppose will be the result? The prospect before us is appalling, and we seem to be led by madmen. Of course, Gen. Frémont and the men around him, whose official existence depends upon his not being superseded, are desperate. But should they be permitted to drag to destruction, or at least to great and unnecessary suffering, the 30,000 men of this army, for no other purpose than to save, if possible, their own official lives?

While Major Zagonyi and his so-called Frémont Bodyguard of picked cavalrymen, one hundred and fifty strong, were delivering their victorious and memorable charge against the Confederate garrison at Springfield, and while Frémont's army was pushing beyond that town, the sands of the President's patience were running out. He feared the loss of invaluable men in the hills of Arkansas. Adjutant-General Lorenzo

¹ Frémont MSS.; Pope to Hunter, Oct. 26, 1861.

Thomas had gone to St. Louis along with Secretary Cameron and had made an inspection of his own, and upon his return he published a report¹ caustically arraiguing Frémont for incompetence, extravagance and irregularity. Thomas had moved exclusively in the Blair circle in Missouri, and had formed his conclusions there. He declared, naturally enough, that in the opinion of many observers Frémont “is more fond of the pomp than of the realities of the war—that his mind is incapable of fixed attention or strong concentration—that by his mismanagement of affairs since his arrival in Missouri, the State has almost been lost—and that if he is continued in command the worst results may be anticipated. “This conclusion he supported by a series of hearsay allegations. It was obviously a prejudiced witness who would talk about the state being lost when order was wholly restored and the last important Confederate force was scurrying for Arkansas. Many men knew that Thomas disliked Frémont, that he had opposed Frémont’s appointment, and that from the beginning he had spoken abusively of Frémont.² Moreover, his allegations, when analyzed, were seen to amount to little. He said that there had been irregularities in the pay department, and that the chief paymaster complained of improper orders; that the quartermaster in St. Louis reported confused and irregular requisitions; and that a good many people were suspi-

¹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 540 ff.; *N. Y. Tribune*, Oct. 30.

² Cf. Jessie Benton Frémont, *The Story of the Guard*, 86, 87.

cious of the contracts Frémont had let. Of such evidence as a court of law would admit there was very little. The press and the public paid slight heed to the Adjutant-General.

But, unfortunately for Frémont, Thomas by no means stood alone. General Hunter had stated categorically to Secretary Cameron that he did not think Frémont fit for the command.¹ Lincoln had hoped that Frémont would make Hunter his advisor and guide; but the two had not got on—Hunter underrated Frémont, and Frémont, thinking that Hunter wished to harass him, detached him for a comparatively unimportant field command. Brigadier-General S. R. Curtis of St. Louis expressed the same conclusion. "In my judgment," he wrote the President, "General Frémont lacks the intelligence, the experience, and the sagacity necessary to his command."

At the same time, Elihu B. Washburne, who visited St. Louis at the head of a Congressional subcommittee upon government contracts, wrote to members of the Administration that "such robbery, fraud, extravagance, speculation as have developed in Frémont's department can hardly be conceived of." He spoke of a "horde of pirates" ruining the credit of the government.² Unquestionably there was extravagance and fraud. But there was less of it in St. Louis than in Washington, and the principal charges of wastefulness against Frémont

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, Ch. 24.

² *Chase MSS.*, Oct. 31, 1861.

were later completely exploded. Washburne had accepted without full investigation the stories of the Blair circle and of some disappointed contractors; moreover, he was an economical Yankee who had not yet grasped the fact that it is impossible to wage war without a lavish expenditure. All Frémont's contracts for fortifications, supplies, foodstuffs, arms, steamboats, and so on, totaled only about \$12,000,000. At the moment, however, Washburne's voice carried great weight. Moreover, even men cordially disposed toward Frémont joined the chorus of criticism. Gustav Koerner wrote his wife that the confusion was preposterous and that he might resign at any time. The evidence for the essential features of the indictment against Frémont seemed overwhelming.

It was a bizarre situation. It was bizarre in that the Commander of the West, while thus being denounced as incompetent by a vigorous group in Missouri and by the Administration's best observers, was regarded with admiring devotion by his army, applauded by most of the Unionists of the state, and looked upon as a hero by all the radicals of the North. It was bizarre in that Frémont, exalted one hour by his expectation of dissipating Price's troops to the wind and turning triumphantly against the Confederates on the Mississippi, was depressed the next by the insubordination of Pope and Hunter and the fear of a sudden removal. His letters to Jessie show a feverish alternation of hope and despair. Just as he had the

West well in hand, he felt he was being stabbed in the back. "I assure you I am getting pretty well tired of being badgered in this way," he wrote,¹ with an express threat of resignation. To drop his load would be a relief, he added; but he could not think calmly of the scoundrels who were throwing away brave lives and imperiling the war to gratifying their base ambitions.

To Lincoln it appeared that a change was imperative. Yet even at the last he acted with a characteristic degree of forbearing patience. On October 24, he wrote an order relieving Frémont from his command, which was to be given to General Hunter; and he dispatched it by a personal friend to General Curtis in St. Louis. "Dear Sir," he wrote Curtis; "On receipt of this, with the accompanying enclosures, you will take safe, certain, and suitable measures to have the inclosure addressed to Major-General Frémont delivered to him with all reasonable dispatch, subject to these conditions only, that if, when General Frémont shall be reached by the messenger,—yourself or anyone sent by you—he shall then have, in personal command, fought and won a battle, or shall then be actually in battle, or shall then be in the immediate presence of the enemy in expectation of a battle, it is not to be delivered, but held for further orders. After, and not till after, the delivery to General Frémont, let the inclosure addressed to General Hunter be delivered to him."

Under these circumstances, the final scene of the

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *The Story of the Guard*, 174 ff.

“hundred days” was played out. The army of Frémont on November 2 was encamped just beyond Springfield, and all dispositions had been made for an immediate advance and battle; for on the misinformation sent him by scouts, Frémont quite erroneously believed that the enemy were ready to fight him on Wilson’s Creek. The spirit of the troops was high. With nearly all of them, Frémont was enormously popular, and they were convinced that a victory was near at hand. He was serenaded and cheered at every opportunity. The official messenger with the order of dismissal entered the camp by stratagem, and after much difficulty in gaining an audience was taken at nightfall before Frémont. “The general,” he tells us, “was sitting at the end of quite a long table facing the door by which I entered. I never can forget the appearance of the man as he sat there, with his piercing eye and his hair parted in the middle. I ripped from my coat lining the document, which had been sewed in there, and handed the same to him, which he nervously took and opened. He glanced at the superscription, and then at the signature at the bottom, not looking at the contents. A frown came over his brow, and he slammed the papers down on the table and said, ‘Sir, how did you get admission into my lines?’ ”¹

Frémont had lost his command—lost it under circumstances of the most humiliating character. Many of his officers were dismissed with him, without pay, on the

¹ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II, Ch. 24.

ground that their commissions had been irregularly issued. But the sting of the blow was largely taken away by the outburst of feeling which at once came from all over the North.

The intelligence, spreading like a prairie fire through the camps at Springfield, aroused indescribable indignation and excitement.¹ Officers by the dozen declared they would resign at once. Many companies threw down their arms, saying they would fight under nobody but Frémont. Impromptu mass meetings were held in every tented street. The General had to spend much of the evening expostulating with officers and men and urging them to stick by their posts. All the Germans talked loudly of resisting General Hunter when he came to assume command, and Frémont felt impelled to issue strict orders that there should be no insubordination and no demonstration when he left. Finally the troops quieted down, but their spirit was gone. "It would be impossible to exaggerate the gloom which pervaded our camps," wrote the *New York Herald's* correspondent of the scene the next morning, "and nothing but General Frémont's urgent endeavors prevented it from ripening into general mutiny." General Hunter was delayed in arriving to assume the command. Everyone believed still that the enemy was just in front of them, and that but for this change of command a decisive success might have been achieved. Finally, toward evening on November 3, Frémont promised the

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Springfield correspondence, Nov. 3, 4, 1861.

officers who thronged his quarters that if General Hunter did not arrive, he would lead the army to the attack the next morning.

Then there ensued one of the strangest scenes of the war. “I never saw anything at all approaching the excitement this announcement created,” wrote one observer.¹ Officers ran from the headquarters shouting the news. Men threw their hats in air. Wave after wave of cheering rose up, spreading from camp to camp and growing more and more remote as the distant regiments heard the news. Band after band began to play, and soon twelve of them were massed in front of the General’s tent, serenading him simultaneously. The universal depression changed to exultant joy, and everybody prepared to start for the battlefield at daylight. All this to meet an enemy who was not before them at all, and who could not be brought to fight except after days of hard marching—perhaps not even then! At ten o’clock at night, General Hunter arrived, Frémont handed over the command to him, and prepared to leave the next day. The generals spent two hours in conference, and Frémont outlined his plan of battle. But Hunter had received strict orders from Lincoln that he was not to continue a risky pursuit of the elusive Confederates. “You are not likely to overtake Price,” wrote Lincoln, “and are in danger of making too long a line from your own base of supplies and reinforcements.” The President added a sentence

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Springfield correspondence, Nov. 8, 1861.

which implied his condemnation of what he supposed to be Frémont's general strategy:

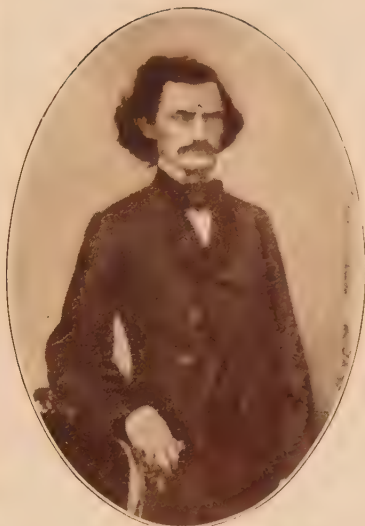
While, as stated in the beginning of the letter, a large discretion must be and is left with yourself, I feel sure that an indefinite pursuit of Price, or an attempt by this long and circuitous route to reach Memphis, will be exhaustive beyond endurance, and will end in the loss of the whole force engaged in it.

In St. Louis, the news of Frémont's arrival produced the same shock of excitement and anger, followed by the same general gloom. Citizens put their flags at half-mast or draped them with black. Soldiers dashed their arms to the cobblestones in the streets, declaring that they were through with the war. The local authorities were fearful, as on an earlier occasion when a false rumor of Frémont's dismissal had been published,¹ that a mob would rise and lynch Frank Blair and his associates, and the angriest threats were heard against Blair's life. When Frémont arrived in the city on November 8, he was met by a vast tumultuous assemblage, which welcomed him with bands of music, and, cheering vociferously, surrounded his headquarters. A committee of German-Americans read a complimentary address, and handed him a set of resolutions, declaring that "we recognize in John C. Frémont the embodiment of our patriotic feeling and political faith," that "he

¹ Cf. B. Rush Plumly's letter, Oct. 9, *Chase MSS.*



GEN. NATHANIEL P. BANKS



MAJOR-GENERAL CARL SCHURZ



MAJOR-GENERAL LEW WALLACE



MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN M. SCHOFIELD

FOUR WARTIME ASSOCIATES OF FRÉMONT

has performed his arduous and responsible tasks with all possible energy and honesty," and that they believed that "a wise Providence may have reserved him for a still wider sphere of action in future times."¹ Jessie, who had denounced the treatment of Frémont, left to organize and lead his army without money or the moral aid of the Government, as "treason," was with him to lend her comfort and voice a resentment which he never publicly expressed.

Unquestionably, President Lincoln did wisely in removing Frémont. The antagonisms he had aroused would alone have made his continuance in command impossible. Nevertheless, a great body of observers in Missouri believed then and always that he had acted, not merely with high patriotism, but with sagacity and efficiency. Many members of his command, including such able and acute men as Gustav Koerner, defended him loyally. The views of his adherents are well expressed in a letter which W. G. Eliot, later president of Washington University, and a civilian of detached position, wrote to Secretary Chase late in October:²

I can easily understand that to unfriendly eyes Gen. Frémont may have laid himself open to cen-

¹ *Appleton's Annual Cyclopædia*, 1861, p. 494.

² *Frémont MSS.* Eliot (of the same family as the president of Harvard), was a bold opponent of slavery, an active assistant of Lyon and Blair in the opening days of the war, and one of the leaders in the Western Sanitary Commission. It has been said of him (*Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography*, II, 325) that "he was engaged in all sorts of public and philanthropic enterprises, and has probably done more for the advancement of St. Louis and all the Southwest than any other man that has ever lived in that section." His reputation is still great in all Missouri, and his judgment demands respect.

sure in many particulars. There has been at times a degree of military demonstration, a seeming tendency to extravagant parade, a boldness in taking responsibility even at the risk of exceeding his authority, that has surprised and alarmed the semi-loyal. Even some hearty Unionists have doubted his wisdom and desired a greater degree of conciliation and caution. But we must consider the extreme difficulty of his position. Many things which would be wrong in time of peace, are right and wise in time of war, and promptness of action is sometimes better than caution and refusal to take responsibility. It should be remembered that Frémont assumed command at a time of the greatest difficulty, just after the Manassas disaster, when the Union cause was at the lowest ebb. He found St. Louis terribly demoralized. The Secessionists were in ecstasies, and had little doubt of speedy success. One of them openly said to me that "there was a bullet moulded for every Yankee Abolitionist in St. Louis." Many of our wealthiest men openly declared themselves for the South. At one of the most conspicuous corners of the city, Fifth and Pine Streets, in the well-known Berthold mansion, the Confederate headquarters were established, with the Confederate flag conspicuously flying, and recruits were openly enlisted for the Confederate cause. The city authorities did not dare to interfere. There was not a United States flag to be

seen anywhere, and Union men spoke with bated breath. The city was not secure from insurrection nor the State from secession.

Now without going into details, at the end of two or three weeks after Frémont's arrival, everything was changed. The Union flag went up and the Confederate flag came down. The secession headquarters were closed, and troops of Union soldiers from Iowa and Illinois and Missouri poured into the city attracted by the prestige of Frémont's name. The bold demonstration of strength *created* strength. The prompt declaration of martial law throughout the State, by many denounced as an extreme measure, held in check the disloyal tendencies, and in a short time gave a totally new aspect to affairs. By erection of earthworks around the city, employment at high wages was given to two or three thousand discontented laborers, all of whom were required to take the oath of allegiance, thus controlling effectually the most unruly part of the population.

The general result is that the city is now safe from attack or insurrection. The defences around it are equal to an army of 20,000 men for resisting an attacking force, and for the control of the city itself. I do not know that they were strictly necessary from a military point of view, but the moral effect has been great, and if any unexpected reverses should occur, they will be of great use. So

long as the city is held, the pacification of the State is only a question of time. St. Louis may be now regarded as a thoroughly loyal city. The thought of secession is getting to be absurd. Such is now the public sentiment of the better classes and the final settlement seems sure.

I do not claim that the whole credit of this great change belongs to Frémont, but he has been the responsible leader, and as the blame of every disaster is laid upon him, he should have a measurable share of the praise for what is good. A commander-in-chief is properly judged by the general effect of his administration, rather than by the special incidents of progress. He is sorely blamed for not sending reinforcements to General Lyon, but I doubt if he could have done so consistently with his more imperative duties in the occupation of Cairo and Bird's Point, which were sharply threatened by the Confederate forces. The official documents will show.

I have almost no personal acquaintance with Gen. Frémont, and have nothing to lose or gain through him, except as a loyal citizen of Missouri. I am pleading not for him, but for the cause he represents. He is now at the head of an enthusiastic army, almost in the presence of the enemy. It would not only be unjust and unfair but unwise, to supersede him until a battle is fought.

But outside Missouri a great number of the General's adherents cared little about defending the details of his military administration. Frémont had become a symbol. To an enormous multitude in the North and the West, his name stood for the radical demand that the abolition of slavery be made an object of the war. If the modification of his proclamation had caused a storm, his removal now aroused a perfect hurricane of wrath. The very threat of it had given a check to recruiting in Ohio and other states.¹ Men had implicit confidence in him, and no attack by Frank Blair or Lorenzo Thomas could shake it. In Cincinnati, a great county mass meeting had cheered his proclamation "with the wildest outburst of continued applause that was ever witnessed" there, "screaming, yelling, stamping, whooping, throwing hats, and embracing each other."² In New England, men had agreed with Garrison's *Liberator*, which greeted it with a "*Laus Deo*," as "the beginning of the end." Ben Wade, in the middle of October, had written Frémont that "all your enemies have yet been able to do has not in the least shaken the unbounded confidence which the people have ever had in you, and we all hope you will persevere in the course you have thus far pursued. No greater misfortune could befall the country than that you should retire at this period."³ Now the blow had fallen, and thousands were embittered and angry. Whittier wrote:

¹ E. B. Sadler, *Chase MSS.*, Sept. 17, 1861.

² E. T. Carson, *Chase MSS.*, Sept. 22, 1861.

³ *Frémont MSS.*

Thy error, Frémont, simply was to act
A brave man's part, without the statesman's tact,
And, taking counsel but of common sense,
To strike at cause as well as consequence.

O, never yet since Roland wound his horn
At Roncesvalles, has a blast been blown
Far-heard, wide-echoing, startling as thine own,
Heard from the van of Freedom's hope forlorn!

Secretary Chase's confidential agent in St. Louis had informed him at the first ill-founded report of Frémont's removal that "if the President had emptied the arsenals of the government into the camps of the rebels, he could not have so effectively strengthened them." His agent in Pittsburgh wrote him that some of the great capitalists there were so enraged that they would not put a cent into government securities.¹ "Is it known to the Administration," demanded the editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette*, "that the West is threatened with a revolution? Could you have been among the people yesterday, and witnessed the excitement; could you have seen sober citizens pulling from their walls and trampling under foot the portrait of the President; and could you hear today the expressions of all classes of men, of all political parties, you would, I think, feel as I feel, and as every sincere friend of the government must feel, alarmed."² Professor C. E. Stowe of Andover, Massachusetts, wrote in the same terms. "I wish you could hear the voices of surprise, indignation, disgust and contempt which now everywhere find utter-

¹ Alexander Gordon, *Chase MSS.*, Sept. 17, 1861.

² Richard Smith, *Chase MSS.*, Nov. 7.

ance at the removal of Frémont. The feeling is frightfully earnest.”¹ Few believed that the reports of Meigs, Cameron, and Thomas were at all fair. “The thing,” said Simeon Nash of Gallipolis, Ohio, “has been done in a way to destroy public confidence in its honesty.” Another correspondent wrote Chase that he had just returned from a tour as far west as Iowa, and that: “I never have seen such excitement, such deep indignant feeling everywhere I have travelled.”²

“Where are you,” demanded Thaddeus Stevens of the radicals in Congress, “that you let the hounds run down your friend Frémont?”³ Stevens was a formidable political figure, and he did not stand alone. A mass meeting at Cooper Institute on November 27, 1861, listened to an oration by Charles Sumner warmly laudatory of Frémont, and—with Schuyler Colfax, David Dudley Field, Charles King, William M. Evarts, and other distinguished men on the platform—adopted resolutions indorsing Frémont’s doctrine with respect to the emancipation of the slaves of rebels. Henry Ward Beecher asked the General to come to Plymouth Church one Sunday morning, and in his sermon harshly condemned Daniel Webster as a statesman who had timidly compromised with slavery. “He died, and is *dead*,” said Beecher. “But,” turning to General Frémont, “your name will live and be remembered by a nation of freemen.”

¹ *Chase MSS.*, Nov. 6, 1861.

² J. Cable of Lee, Ohio, *Chase MSS.*, Nov. 13, 1861.

³ *Stevens MSS.*, Nov. 5, 1861.

From the voice of his contemporaries, Frémont could derive much comfort; he could even, a little later, feel that he had been publicly vindicated. The Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War, after an elaborate investigation, reported in the spring of 1863 that he was not to blame for the failure to reinforce Lyon or Mulligan; that he had acted with energy and promptness; that various of his measures, such as the building of gunboats, had been of the highest value; and that his administration of the Western Department "was eminently characterized by earnestness, ability, and the most unquestionable loyalty." The members of the Committee, Ben Wade, Zachariah Chandler, John Covode, and George W. Julian, were politically sympathetic toward Frémont, yet their verdict carried a decided degree of weight. In Congress, his record was enthusiastically defended by Schuyler Colfax, John Shanks, and others, though Colfax was in no sense a personal friend of Frémont's.

The consensus of historical opinion has been less kind. James Ford Rhodes, John Fiske, and Nicolay and Hay have all agreed that Frémont's record shows that he was poorly fitted for the command which he took. In this judgment, they are to a considerable extent right. He was deficient in the ability to organize the complex and multifarious activities of his Department, his estimate of men was highly faulty, he showed a signal lack of tact, and his characteristic impulsiveness led him into a



From the Frederick H. Meserve Collection

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

cardinal and fatal error—the emancipation proclamation, which he should never have issued without consulting the President. A man with genuine military genius would certainly have managed to save Mulligan, and possibly Lyon as well. Frémont showed no spark of that rare quality. A leader with more address and adaptability would hardly have estranged Blair and his supporters so completely and quickly as Frémont did. He never learned to co-ordinate his forces properly, and in his military plans, as in all else, he remained something of a dreamer—prone, as General Curtis said, to “dash at a shadow.”

But this is not all the story, and the historians named have done far less than justice to Frémont. His earnestness, zeal, and patriotism were above question. He labored with almost superhuman energy, and gave his best talents to the cause. The difficulties of his position, tossed as he was suddenly into a Department without organization, without money, without arms or stores, without anything but raw recruits, asked not merely to raise and use armies but to equip them, left to shift for himself by an Administration intent upon the eastern front, and compelled to deal with sedition at home as well as organized enemies in the field, can hardly be exaggerated. They would have tried the capacities of the ablest men. Grant himself might have failed. With all his shortcomings, Frémont in three months did bring an army into being, did virtually clear Missouri of the

enemy, did take practical measures important for the future, and, above all, did place in Kentucky a force and a commander who were destined to win the first real victories of the War.

CHAPTER XXXIII

OUT OF FAVOR WITH LINCOLN

WHEN Frémont left the army at Springfield and with the Zagonyi Guard and his personal staff as escort set out for the railhead at Rolla, his associates were struck by his buoyancy and gayety; as he cantered along, he laughed and chatted like a schoolboy set free for a holiday. These high spirits remained with him in St. Louis. He busied himself for a fortnight collecting documentary evidence upon the transactions of the Western Department, to be used in his defense. Every possible indignity was put upon him. Not merely was the Zagonyi Guard mustered out without pay, quarters, or rations, on the ground that at Springfield they had expressed disloyal sentiments, but all his contracts of various kinds were cancelled, and officers were sent from Washington to determine whether the bills he had incurred should be paid. Yet his aides tell us that the Brant mansion resounded with life and good humor. The General, wrote one in his diary, was "absolutely on the rampage with fun and fire. Our table is about the jolliest, most sociable, most enjoyable spot of its kind that I have experienced."¹

Underneath this buoyancy, however, lay a smolder-

¹ John R. Howard, Statement to Author: *Diary*, Nov. 16, 1861.

ing sense of injustice; and from this time forward Frémont was a confirmed opponent of the Administration. He shared in the belief of many radical Republicans that its military, political, and diplomatic policies were inept and inefficient. His papers show that, feeling he had been grossly wronged, he was convinced that the Administration—and especially the Blair element—had dealt with him under the influence of selfish personal motives. Why had it failed to supply him with funds and munitions? Why, at the moment when Mulligan was reported in danger and every man was needed at Paducah, had it stripped his command of 5,000 well-armed troops, not revoking the order till the harm was done? Why had Secretary Cameron and General Thomas left him in command when they thought he was stuck fast in the mud at Tipton, but removed him when he had extricated himself and was about to defeat Price or drive him from the state? ¹

And what of Mrs. Frémont? Her indignation was even more intense, and for a time it led her to believe that Frémont was the victim of a traitorous conspiracy on the part of the Blairs. Throughout the hundred days, her anxieties and labors had matched those of her husband. In a curious scrap of autobiography, she tells us that when Frémont was in pursuit of Price, the well-known St. Louis merchant, Thornton Grimsley, had come and told her that confidential information of the Union movements was being smuggled by treachery to

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

Price's headquarters, and that the enemy was thus aware that neither Hunter's nor Pope's divisions would join Frémont's army. Mrs. Frémont, in a frenzy of anxiety, hurried off a trusted Negro to carry the news to her husband. She was oppressed all day by fears of some frightful disaster. That night at dinner her cousin, Mrs. Brant, remarked: "We have had such a rain today that I can't understand why your hair is all dusty." Nobody thought more of the subject; but the next morning her English maid began combing the hair, and stopped suddenly with tears in her eyes. "It had been a chestnut brown," writes Mrs. Frémont, "but now every hair was marked with an alternating white patch about an inch apart, giving an odd look of mottled gray to the whole."¹ At this time, she was only thirty-six.

If this indicates the emotional stress under which she had labored, another autobiographical fragment indicates how sternly she nursed her wrath.² Returning to New York, the Frémonts stayed for a time at the Astor House, where they received much attention from radical Senators and Congressman; then they took apartments on Fourth Avenue, and shortly went to Washington, so that Frémont might aid the investigation into the Western Department. Early in 1862, they were invited to a ball at the Executive Mansion. Many members of Washington society refused; a friend told Jessie that Mrs. Lincoln had shown her eighty

¹ *Jessie Benton Frémont MSS.*

² *Idem.*

declinations, among them one by Senator Wade, who wrote upon the card: "Are the President and Mrs. Lincoln aware that there is a civil war? If they are not, Mr. and Mrs. Wade are, and for that reason decline to participate in feasting and dancing." But the President sent one of his household to say that he especially desired Frémont to be present, and so they consented. On the morning before the ball, Dorothea Dix, an old friend, told Jessie that she had just left the White House, where Lincoln was in great grief because of the desperate illness of his son Willie:

The President spoke of the ball, and wanted to stop it, but it came off. The only alteration made was that there was no dancing. It was announced officially that on account of the illness in the house there would be no dancing; but the Marine Band at the foot of the steps filled the house with music while the boy lay dying above. A sadder face than that of the President I have rarely seen. He was receiving at the large door of the East Room, speaking to the people as they came, but feeling so deeply that he spoke of what he felt and thought, instead of welcoming the guests. To Gen. Frémont he at once said that his son was very ill and that he feared for the result. On seeing his sad face and grieved appearance, the feeling with which we had gone gave way to pity, and after expressing our hopes for the lad's recovery we

passed on to make our respects to the President's wife. The ball was becoming a ghastly failure. . . .

The political feeling of the country was represented there that night by strangers, members of Congress, and persons brought down to Washington by the business of the war. Uniforms and ladies' evening dress gave their brightness, but almost angry feeling for and against emancipation, and for a quick sharp conduct of the war, found its expression there that night. The President was so sad, so bowed down by the thought of the coming loss of his son, that it seemed to depress the company, and they shifted around until the larger portion had congregated on the other side of the East Room, where Gen. Frémont was standing. The whole talk was on the necessary peremptory pursuit of the war to make the South realize that it could not maintain slavery under the protection of the North.

So many criticized the conduct of the war and regretted that the effort of four years before had not been successful; and there was so much feeling of sorrow that Gen. Frémont's policy of emancipation was not to be carried out, that it became embarrassing, and we left. I had hardly got my wraps on before we were recalled by Mr. Sumner, who came with a message from the President saying that he wanted us to return, that he

specially wanted Gen. Frémont. It seemed the President had found that Gen. McClellan and Gen. Frémont had never met. . . .

As we crossed the long East Room, the President came forward to meet the General; took him by the arm leading him to Gen. McClellan who was at the upper end of the room, and introduced them to each other, then introducing Mrs. McClellan and myself. We bowed, but as each seemed to wait for the other, neither of us spoke a single word. One look showed me she was dressed in the Secession colors. A band of scarlet velvet crossed her white dress from shoulder to waist, and in her hair were three feathers of scarlet and white. If this was intentional, it was unpardonable in the wife of the commander-in-chief of the Union armies, and yet it seemed impossible to have been quite an accident. After a few minutes' talk between the President, Gen. McClellan, and Gen. Frémont, we left.

At this moment the pressure upon the Administration for the reappointment of Frémont to a military command was becoming irresistible. Many Germans of the West and radicals of the North were implacably indignant. Early in the year, Frémont had appeared before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, and reports had reached the public that this body was "staggered" by the ease with which he disproved every ac-

cusation.¹ At the beginning of March, he gave the press the full text of his defense, with a mass of documents included. The *Tribune*, publishing it complete in an extra sheet, accompanied it with an editorial broadside defending his record and declaring that no other commander had been pursued with such unjust malevolence. A great part of the press both in the East and in the West took up his side. There ensued an immediate explosion in Congress. Frank Blair, on March 7, made a vitriolic speech attacking Frémont's Missouri record, and the Congressional radicals rushed to the fray. The leading address in Frémont's behalf was delivered by Schuyler Colfax, and was a masterly presentation of the case for the General. Lincoln saw that it was best to yield to the storm, and give Frémont another opportunity in the field.

The General's assignment was to the command of the newly created Mountain Department in western Virginia; and proceeding to Wheeling, he there relieved General Rosecrans on March 29, 1862. The appointment was applauded by the whole Northern press. Frémont had reason to receive it with elation. Though his force was small, amounting on paper to only about 25,000, and actually to much less, and was badly equipped, his Department represented a pet idea of Lincoln's. The President believed it was possible to march from western Virginia over the mountains into eastern Tennessee, and seize the railroad at Knoxville,

¹ Howard, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 173.

thus relieving the Unionists of that region. It was an impractical idea; but Frémont had promised that, given an adequate force, he would attempt the feat.

Unfortunately, Lincoln's whole disposition of forces in western Virginia was at fault, and the next few months allowed Stonewall Jackson to make a spectacular demonstration of the fact at the expense of the three generals opposing him. These were N. P. Banks, who had a small army in the Shenandoah Valley—9,000 men at the moment of Jackson's raid; Frémont, with about 15,000 troops at different points in the Shenandoah Mountains; and McDowell, who, charged especially with the defense of Washington, had ultimately about 40,000 troops at Fredericksburg. These three forces should have been under the command of a single general. Instead, the only central command was that which Lincoln himself, acting on telegraphic advices to Washington, undertook to furnish.

The story of Jackson's brilliant and spectacular Valley campaign against the three generals has often been told, and needs no rehearsal in detail.¹ He had some 17,000 effective men, and the armies brought against him outnumbered his troops by at least two to one.² Yet by his daring, his rapidity of movement, and his ability to appear at unexpected points and to dodge pursuit, Jackson managed to strike blow after blow, to defeat or evade each opposing commander, and, after

¹ J. G. Ropes, *Story of the Civil War*, II, 115 ff.

² Cf. James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States From the Compromise of 1850*, IV, 13.

throwing Washington into a panic, to return to a safe position with rich spoils and thousands of prisoners. He whipped Schenck at the village called McDowell, overwhelmed Banks at Winchester and drove him across the Potomac in wild disorder, eluded Frémont, who was checked at Cross Keys by Ewell, crushed two brigades under Tyler at Port Republic, and got safely away; all this between May 19 and June 10, 1862.

Frémont in this campaign has been accused of showing at certain points a lack of energy. If he and McDowell had met at Strasburg on May 30, they could possibly have cut off Jackson's retreat, but Frémont did not get there even by the 31st. Moreover, he was ordered by Lincoln at an earlier stage of the campaign to march to Harrisonburg, and instead turned up at Moorfield. For all this, he is, at least by implication, censured by the historian Rhodes.¹ But the censure is hardly deserved. When Lincoln sent Carl Schurz to the scene in the early days of June to make a confidential report, Schurz exonerated the commander upon both heads. "It is a fact which admits of no doubt," he wrote the President, "that when you ordered Gen. Frémont to march from Franklin to Harrisonburg, it was absolutely impossible to carry out the order. The army was in a starving condition, and literally unable to fight. . . . Thus it seems to have been necessary to move back to Moorfield, in order to meet the supply

¹ Rhodes, *United States*, IV, 15 ff.

trains." He added that the troops had proceeded by forced marches to Strasburg, leaving most of the baggage and knapsacks behind. "The march was difficult, and owing to the lack of provisions, very hard on the men. The army failed to arrest Jackson at Strasburg, and although it seems that Jackson's rear guard might have been attacked with more promptness and vigor, yet it is undoubtedly a very fortunate circumstance that Gen. Frémont did not succeed in placing himself across Jackson's line of retreat." Frémont had at most 10,000 men, "in a wretched condition," and Jackson's larger army would almost certainly have defeated the ill-conditioned force.

As Schurz said later, a highly resolute, self-reliant commander would have taken the risk of this defeat and strained every nerve to be at Strasburg on time; yet Frémont believed that he had done all that was humanly possible. He declared later that nothing could have excelled the devotion with which his tired, ill-clad, ill-fed troops pursued Jackson's rear guard after the action at Strasburg. "The road was strewn with arms, blankets, and clothing, thrown away in their [the rebels'] haste, or abandoned by their pickets where they had been surprised, and the woods and roads were lined by their stragglers, unable to keep up with the rapid retreat. For nine days we kept in sight of the enemy—the pursuit interrupted only by the streams where the enemy succeeded in destroying the bridges for which

our advance was in continual contest with his rear.”¹ After Cross Keys, Lincoln telegraphed him, “Many thanks to yourself, officers, and men for the gallant battle of last Sunday”; and he later added, in another message: “You fought Jackson alone and worsted him”—which was not precisely true.

Schurz had heard much of Frémont, and studied the General with curiosity. He found him a man of “elegant build, muscular and elastic, dark hair and beard slightly streaked with gray, a broad forehead, a keen eye, fine regular features.” He praised his air of refinement, his easy and unaffected manners, and his low, gentle tone of voice, which carried a suggestion of reticence. “The whole personality,” he concluded, “appeared rather attractive—and yet, one did not feel quite sure.”² In his report to Lincoln, Schurz included a sage word of political warning:

This morning I found General Frémont in a somewhat irritated frame of mind, and I must confess I understand it. The government has plenty of provisions, and our soldiers die of hunger; plenty of shoes, and they go barefooted; plenty of horses, and we are hardly able to move. *I would entreat you let it not be said that this army is more neglected than any other. It would appear that it is*

¹ Frémont's letter, *N. Y. Tribune*, Feb. 12, 1863. Col. G. F. R. Henderson, in his *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*, I, Ch. 11, takes Schurz's view that Frémont lacked boldness, and states that by a daring stroke at Cross Keys he might have secured Jackson's defeat.

² Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, II, 343-346.

willfully so, and you know how this will be interpreted. The task this army has before it is an important one, and it ought to have the means to fulfill it.

But Lincoln had been too thoroughly imbued by the Blairs' prejudices to trust Fremont, and under any circumstances the General's service would have been brief. In the middle of June, Fremont asked the President to increase his force, promising that if it were augmented to 35,000 men, the strength originally promised him, he would capture Staunton, seize the Richmond-Newbern Railroad, and prevent the enemy from using western Virginia as a rich granary. The correspondence which ensued reveals the deep-seated distrust which Lincoln felt for his Commander. Frémont had been courteous in reminding the President of his promise of a larger army. "I now ask from the President the fulfillment of this understanding," he wrote, "and ask it only because, under the conditions of the war here, I should be able to render good and immediate service." But the President's reply the next day showed not a little asperity. He telegraphed:

Your dispatch of yesterday, reminding me of a supposed understanding that I would furnish you a corps of 35,000 men, and reminding me of the "fulfillment of this understanding," is received. I am ready to come to a fair settlement of accounts with you on the fulfillment of understandings.

Early in March last, when I assigned you to the command of the Mountain Department, I did tell you I would give you all the force I could, and that I hoped to make it reach 35,000. You at the same time told me that within a reasonable time you would seize the railroad at or east of Knoxville, Tenn., if you could. There was then in the department a force supposed to be 25,000, the exact number as well known to you as to me. After looking about two or three days, you called and distinctly told me, that if I would add the Blenker Division to the force already in the department, you would undertake the job. The Blenker Division contained 10,000, and at the expense of great dissatisfaction to Gen. McClellan I took it from his army and gave it to you. My promise was literally fulfilled. I have given you all I could, and I have given you very nearly, if not quite, 35,000.

Now for yours: On the 23d of May, largely over two months afterward, you were at Franklin, Va., not within three hundred miles of Knoxville, nor within eighty miles of any part of the railroad east of it, and not moving forward but telegraphing here that you could not move for lack of everything. Now, do not misunderstand me. I do not say you have not done all you could. I presume you met unexpected difficulties; and I beg you to believe that as surely as you have done your best, so have I. I have not the power now to fill up your

corps to 35,000. I am only asking of you to stand cautiously on the defensive; get your force in order, and give such protection as you can to the valley of the Shenandoah and to Western Virginia.

Have you received the orders and will you act upon them?

A. Lincoln.

Lincoln's dispatch is worth printing because it shows clearly that the President was unconvinced of Frémont's military capacity and ready to find fault with his acts. As a matter of fact, its criticism was hardly fair. Military critics have agreed that Lincoln's plan for the capture of Knoxville was highly impracticable. Blenker's division, which was to raise Frémont's army to 35,000, was not ordered to him until the beginning of April and did not reach his Department until May 5; while it was ragged, shoeless, without tents or sufficient provisions, and tired. Frémont could not argue with the President. He sent a brief and submissive reply, saying simply that the orders had been received, and that, as a matter of course, he would act upon them, as he was now acting. But he read between the lines of Lincoln's message its full significance, and it played its part in his almost immediate decision to withdraw.

For this decision, an excuse was soon furnished, since before June ended action was taken which Frémont regarded as making it impossible for him to remain at his post. Lincoln, wisely but belatedly, consolidated the



"STONEWALL" JACKSON

(He is here shown—beardless—as a first lieutenant fresh from West Point; a little later, with sideburns, as he served in the Mexican War; and as a Confederate General in February, 1862, when he was photographed at Winchester.)

forces of Frémont, Banks, and McDowell into one army, to be called the Army of Virginia, and placed it under the command of General John Pope, the troops of the Mountain Department being constituted the First Corps under Frémont's command. Since his removal in Missouri, Frémont detested Pope only less than he detested Frank Blair. They were avowed enemies. He believed that Pope had been disloyal and insubordinate, and had tried to encompass his defeat. He could not bring himself to hold any intercourse with the man. It would perhaps have been better—it would certainly have been more patriotic—had he sunk his personal resentment and stuck doggedly to his work until, as was inevitable, Pope demonstrated his utter incapacity. But such a course did not square with Frémont's or Mrs. Frémont's high and sensitive conception of personal honor, and he requested that the President relieve him of his command. Lincoln promptly did so.

The course of events had contributed to increase the cleavage between Frémont and the Administration. Lincoln was more convinced than ever that Frémont was intractable and unsafe. He regarded the explorer as a troublesome man providentially shelved. Frémont, chafing for action, but unwilling to surrender his dignity, was convinced that he had been the victim of a new indignity, and that he could never expect justice from Lincoln or the Blairs. He returned to New York, taking his personal staff with him, in an embittered frame of mind. For a time he kept his peace. He was

still one of the ranking officers of the Army, and he had hopes that some conjunction of circumstances might recall him to the field. His radical friends and the radical press were vociferous in urging his claims; Mrs. Frémont pulled whatever wires she could reach. Among others, she approached Hannibal Hamlin. "What can I do?" the Vice-President wrote her. "The slow and unsatisfactory movements of the Government do not meet my approbation, and that is known, and of course I am not consulted at all, nor do I think there is much disposition in any quarter to regard any counsel I may give much if at all." Still, he tried. Others tried, with equal lack of success. Frémont, watching Lincoln's policies with more and more distaste, looked forward to the time when he might cross swords with his enemies—and that time was soon to come.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DEFEAT OF THE BLAIRS

THE year 1864 opened with the storm clouds billowing thickly about the Lincoln Administration, and Frémont watching these omens of trouble with keen interest. Discontent was rife in every quarter—in the Cabinet, in Congress, in the country at large; and everywhere it was breeding political machinations against the President. In these plots, Frémont had no mind to play an active rôle. He had turned quickly to his private business pursuits and was willing to lose himself completely in them. But he fully realized that to hundreds of thousands of voters his name still possessed a magical ring.

A new Congress had convened the previous December, and had at once shown that it was under the domination of radicals who were thoroughly unfriendly to the Administration. Lincoln's candidate for the speakership had been decisively defeated—defeated by the brilliant Indianian, Frémont's warm defender, Schuyler Colfax. The important committees had been filled by men who opposed Lincoln's conservative policy. In the Senate, Charles Sumner, icy, solemn, and pontifical, felt a personal cordiality for Lincoln, but sternly deplored his official course. Zachariah Chandler,

a rough backwoods type of politician, blunt and ruthless, took the same attitude. He, like Lyman Trumbull, the irrepressible Illinoisan, John P. Hale, the supercritical, nagging New Englander, and that domineering egotist, Benjamin F. Wade, was a member of the Committee on the Conduct of the War. Wade as chairman had made this body a thorn in Lincoln's side, and its final report on April 3, 1864, was a resounding blast in favor of a more vigorous prosecution of the War. Then a new joint committee of the same name was organized, and with much the same personnel resumed the attack on the President.

In the House, the foremost place among the opponents of Lincoln was taken by the bitter, narrow, patriotic Thaddeus Stevens, now aged and bowed by disease, but unrelenting as ever. Beside him stood the dashing and comparatively youthful Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, who disputed control over that state with the Blair dynasty. Another who shared their views was George W. Julian of Indiana, who had been disgusted by Lincoln's slowness in proclaiming emancipation. He would never have proclaimed it, Julian believed, if he had not feared that Congress would refuse to vote supplies unless the War were placed upon a definite anti-slavery basis.¹ Lincoln in his December message had proposed to Congress a moderate and tolerant plan for reconstructing the lost states, and the radicals had lost no time in preparing to knife it. Thad-

¹ Julian, *Political Recollections*, 227.

deus Stevens had exploded a little earlier that he was "tired of hearing damned Republican cowards talk about the Constitution," and that we should give the rebels "reconstruction on such terms as would end treason forever." Now Henry Winter Davis brought forward a bill which was intended to destroy Lincoln's reconstruction scheme and furnish a harsher system in its stead. The hostility of all these men toward Lincoln's ambitions for a second term was open and bitter. Young James A. Garfield, who had fought at Shiloh and had just entered Congress from the Ashtabula district of Ohio, wrote that "we hope we may not be compelled to push Lincoln four years more."

If Congress seemed to be alive with discontent and opposition, the Cabinet was even more completely divided. Stanton, a man compounded of disagreeable qualities, jealousy, arbitrariness, ambition, and ill temper, and yet laborious, enormously energetic, a vast organizing force, a thorough patriot, seemed at times to hold Lincoln in utter contempt. He had called him a gorilla and talked of his "painful imbecility."¹ At other times, his loyalty and admiration appeared perfect. Salmon P. Chase was at work day and night laying mines, stringing wires, and planning to make himself President in the stead of the Illinois lawyer whose powers he distrusted and whose aims he thought inadequate. After some initial coyness, his candidacy was perfectly open, and Lincoln had to tolerate it. Wade

¹ Morgan Dix, *John A. Dix*, II, 19.

and Winter Davis gave him their support, while various Congressional radicals and prominent citizens formed a committee—the Republican National Executive Committee—under Senator Samuel C. Pomeroy of Kansas to push his candidacy. From this body shortly came a vigorous pronunciamento, declaring that if the anti-slavery principle was to triumph, if the War was to be vigorously prosecuted, and if the country was to be safe, the voters should rally to elect Chase instead of Lincoln.¹ Chase clubs began to spring up over the North. Meanwhile, other members of the Cabinet were hopelessly antagonistic to each other.

The principal cause of the Cabinet antagonisms was evident to every observer—the Blairs. The Postmaster-General, Montgomery Blair, had early become a storm center. Like his father and brother, he basked in Lincoln's favor, and the family repaid this favor with warmhearted devotion to their chief; but other leaders regarded the tall, angular Missourian with dislike. His talk of solving the slavery question by measures of colonization and compensation enraged the radicals. When emancipation was proposed, the emancipation for which Sumner and Greeley, Wade and Beecher were calling, he had stubbornly opposed it to the last. He declared it inexpedient and would have postponed it even when Lincoln had decided to issue his proclamation. Upon the reconstruction issue, the radicals thought him equally perverse. The whole Blair family was for treat-

¹ *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1864, p. 783; Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, VIII, 319.

ing the South mildly and kindly, and restoring its rights promptly. Montgomery Blair loosed a tremendous broadside against the men who stood for "amalgamation, equality, and fraternity" with the negro race.¹ To the old Abolitionists and to all who, like Zachariah Chandler and Thaddeus Stevens, thought that the Negroes should be treated as friends and the rebels as enemies, the Blairs had become anathema.

Commanding the President's support, Montgomery Blair might have seemed in a position to hold his Cabinet portfolio without making enemies in the President's official family. Instead, he quickly surrounded himself with feuds and antagonisms, and by the year 1864 they had become dangerous in their intensity. He and Seward had nothing but dislike for each other. The elder Blair had by some strange process of reasoning associated Seward and Frémont as allies, and regarded them as twin agents of the Abolitionist cause, an opinion which he took no pains to conceal. Montgomery Blair believed that Seward had tried deliberately to provoke the clash between the North and the South, and made reckless and unfounded charges to that effect.² As for Attorney-General Edward Bates, the Blairs had systematically undermined and opposed him in Missouri politics, and he well knew the fact. The peppery Stanton and the intriguing Montgomery Blair did not get on at all. Montgomery, recalling Stanton's rec-

¹ Kirkland, *The Peacemakers of 1864*, 185.

² T. K. Lothrop, *William Henry Seward*, 123.

ord as a member of Buchanan's Cabinet, doubted his loyalty and zeal in the Union cause, while the two were utterly incompatible in temperament. Stanton was never a man to repress his private hatreds, and he struck out at the Blairs by having some of their Maryland relatives arrested on the charge that they had smuggled supplies of medicine over to the Confederates.¹ When it came to Chase, of course, the enmity was still more open.

Outside official circles, there seemed—to the superficial observer—many evidences of popular chilliness toward Lincoln. The correspondence of Chase and Lyman Trumbull was filled with letters from bitter-enders who resented the President's seemingly tepid policy. The northern pulpit was largely unfriendly. The greatest church magazine, Henry Ward Beecher's *Independent*, declared that: "Great statesmen are few in any country, but few as they are we must make diligent search to find one for the next presidency." Of course the Democratic newspapers were shrill in their abuse. James Gordon Bennett's *Herald*, which the President himself read for its unrivaled war news, lashed the Administration unmercifully. But the Republican press was in part not much less hostile. Greeley's *Tribune* declared that Lincoln's nomination would at once awaken "the fear that the disasters, the burdens, the debts, and the hopes deferred will be revived." Utterances of similar purport could be found in William

¹ Kirkland, *The Peacemakers of 1864*, 187.

Cullen Bryant's dignified *Evening Post*. Both Bryant and Greeley believed that the nomination of a Republican candidate for the Presidency should be deferred until the close of the summer of 1864, in order that the people might know whether the overthrow of the Rebellion was in sight, or its speedy overthrow was a proved impossibility. If the battles of July and August showed that it was impossible to crush the Rebellion at once, then another and better leader than Lincoln could be called to the helm.¹ But some editors were for rejecting Lincoln out of hand. The youthful Whitelaw Reid of the *Cincinnati Gazette* declared that the President was ready to "surrender the cause of human freedom to the masters of slave plantations."²

It was inevitable that much of the opposition to Lincoln should coalesce about the name of Frémont. He was sincerely indifferent to any movement of the sort. Giving up all hope of military employment, he had plunged with his usual enthusiasm into a new business field—railroad building. The newspapers had suggested that if he was not to be allowed a command, he might be appointed military governor of North Carolina or one of the other reconquered states. The great task in these states, said the *Tribune*, was to organize the emancipated slaves. "The first condition for the success of such an effort is to win their confidence. We cannot do it by sending them a general whom they do not

¹ Cf. *N. Y. Tribune*, June 6, 1864.

² William E. Dodd, *Century Magazine*, Vol. 114, p. 48.

know. But Frémont's name has been a watchword in every cabin since 1856, and will be heard at once as a war-cry by the slaves waiting to rally under the Union flag."¹ But Lincoln refused to heed such suggestions. When George Julian called at the White House to urge a post for the explorer, the President replied that he was willing, but that he did not know where to place him. The situation, he said, reminded him of the old man who advised his son to take a wife, to which the son replied, "Whose wife shall I take?" There were important positions in sight, but they could be reached only by removals which he did not care to make.

A somewhat different answer was given to a deputation which, including Senator Henry Wilson, Wendell Phillips, Moncure D. Conway, and Oakes Ames, came to the President to speak about the governorship of North Carolina. Some one suggested Frémont, and Lincoln tolerantly indicated why he thought the proposal a poor one. "I have great respect for Gen. Frémont and his abilities," said the President slowly, "but the fact is that the pioneer in any movement is not generally the best man to carry that movement to a successful issue. It was so in old times, wasn't it?" he continued with a smile. "Moses began the emancipation of the Jews, but didn't take Israel to the Promised Land after all." The truth was that Lincoln could not have appointed Frémont without offending his

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, Feb. 12, 1863.

conservative supporters, and he did not think it necessary, at least as yet, to act.

While Chase was coming brazenly into the open in his pursuit of the nomination, while Thaddeus Stevens was expressing the sagacious view that Ben Butler would make a much better President than Lincoln, and while Greeley was declaring in the *Tribune* that Chase, Frémont, Butler, and Grant ought all to be considered, the explorer had immersed himself in railway operations. His enthusiasm for the opening up of the great trans-Mississippi region was as fresh as ever. The action of Congress richly endowing a Pacific railroad stirred his imagination. Commanding large funds on the credit of Mariposa, having a name valuable to any enterprise, and being personally familiar with western topography, he felt that this offered an ideal field for his energies. In June of 1863, the New York press announced with applause that he had put his hand to the helm. Capitalists had been reluctant, with the War raging, to undertake new lines across the plains. But now Frémont had come forward with Samuel Hallett, widely known, as the *Tribune* said editorially, "in moneyed circles as a man of large financial experience, combined with an energy and indomitable will to which all obstacles are made to succumb."¹ They intended to build a line through the state of Kansas—what was later known as the Kansas Pacific—connecting on the east with the Missouri River terminals; and for this

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, June 4, 1863.

purpose took over a paper railway called the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western. A new directorate was chosen, and Frémont elected president. In a few weeks he was advertising, from his Beaver Street offices, for bids to deliver 4,000 tons of iron rails at Leavenworth or Kansas City.

But if he would willingly have kept aloof from politics, an increasing number of radicals were insistent that he be drafted for service in 1864. Many German-Americans and Abolitionists preferred him above all other candidates; while, as the weeks passed, supporters began to drift in from other camps. Butler's name aroused more derision than enthusiasm. The Chase candidacy, blazing brilliantly in the political heavens in February, came down like a rocket-stick in March. Pomeroy's circular in behalf of the Secretary of the Treasury aroused wide comment. But on February 22, the Republican National Committee, sitting in Washington, virtually came out for the renomination of Lincoln, and called the Republican Convention to sit for that purpose at Baltimore in June. More decisively, on March 5, the Republican caucus of the Ohio Legislature refused to endorse Chase as a "favorite son," which meant that Ohio was for Lincoln. Chase was compelled reluctantly and ungracefully to withdraw, though his desire to see Lincoln supplanted was as strong as ever. Many of his adherents turned toward Frémont.

The first evidence of the way the wind was veering

came on March 19, when radicals and old-school Abolitionists of New York came together at Cooper Union in an earnest "Frémont meeting," of which Frémont knew nothing in advance. The men in charge were for the most part obscure. Under the blazing gas jets in Room 20 that erudite, perfervid big German-American, Friedrich Kapp, mopped his brow and declaimed with a marked accent upon the need for a change of government. A Mr. Whipple gained the floor, and launched into personal abuse of Lincoln. He had himself seen, he said, the bad effects of liquor and the evil influence of slavery. A platform calling for "vigorous, consistent, concentrated prosecution of the war" was read amid cheers. Then there was a stir at the door, a sudden clapping of hands, and everybody arose as the loose, ill-clad figure of Greeley shuffled in. The editor's remarks, as reported by his own journal, were a bit confused.¹ But he squeakily made three facts clear. First, that he thought it would have been well to postpone all nominations and campaigning until people could see what Grant would do in the summer campaigns; second, that he advocated a single term for Presidents; and third, that while he expected to support the regular nominee of the Republican Convention, he believed that "the people of New York were in favor of putting down the rebellion and its cause, and sustaining Freedom, and he believed that John C. Frémont would carry out such views."

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, March 20, 1864.

Perhaps the movement thus brought before the public would have amounted to little; but at this juncture Frank Blair executed a stroke which aroused the radicals to a new pitch of anger. The current seemed to be setting against the President. Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York were apparently hostile to him. All Frank Blair's innate recklessness and pugnacity came to the surface. As a major-general, he had no right to hold civil office, but he had made an arrangement by which he had surrendered his commission temporarily and Lincoln placed it in a secret drawer, to be returned upon demand. By this adroit if illegal manoeuvre, Frank was able to return to Congress. In January, he had begun to make war upon Secretary Chase by calling for an investigation of certain Treasury regulations. Now, on April 23, he suddenly rose in his place and made the most sensational and ferocious speech which Congress had heard in years. He accused Chase of public corruption and private baseness; he declared that Chase had squandered public funds, wrung from a hard-pressed people, to advance his candidacy; and he charged that he had used hundreds of Treasury agents to build up his machine. To support this tirade, he read a letter from a New York financier, which spoke of rumors afloat there; among them a report that Chase had given his son-in-law, Governor Sprague, a permit to buy cotton at the South by which the latter would probably make \$2,000,000.¹

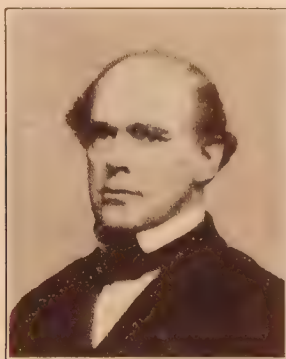
¹ *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st session, Part II, 1252 ff.



EDWIN M. STANTON
(Secretary of War)



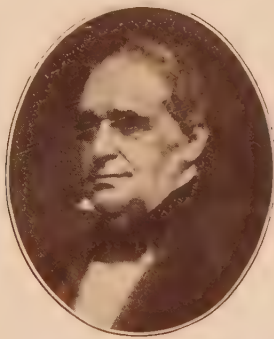
GIDEON WELLES
(Secretary of the Navy)



SALMON P. CHASE
(Secretary of the Treasury)



EDWARD BATES
(Attorney General)



HANNIBAL HAMLIN
(Vice-President)

FIVE MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION

This vicious and ill-considered attack created an uproar among the radical leaders and editors, and increased the resentment with which they viewed the Administration. Chase denounced the speech as an "outrageous calumny." The special car in which he left Washington that day for Baltimore fairly "trembled with his rage."¹ There seems no question that Lincoln was much annoyed by Blair's indiscretion. The man had kicked over another beehive, he said; and for a time he hesitated to restore Blair to his military command, though he had already given the needed instructions. But the radicals naturally believed that Lincoln had done something to instigate Blair's onslaught, and that he had taken satisfaction in it. After this event, Chase and Montgomery Blair glared daggers at each other whenever they met in the Cabinet room, and there was nothing Chase would not have done to chastise the pride of the Blair family.

But Chase was out of the running for the presidency, and it was now evident to everybody that Lincoln would be nominated at Baltimore at the beginning of June. It was by no means so clear that he would be successful in November. James A. Garfield wrote despondingly: "Lincoln will be nominated and a copperhead will be elected. Not a dozen men in Congress think otherwise." But even to have the President again placed at the head of the Republican party was a bitter dose to many of the extremists, and they turned to the idea

¹ A. G. Riddle, *Recollections of War Times*, 267, 268.

of a third ticket. It might be used to obtain the withdrawal of Lincoln from the race; it could certainly be used to increase the chances of his ultimate defeat. On May 4, 1864, a group of radical Republicans who were known to favor the choice of Frémont sent out an invitation to a mass convention at Cleveland, to meet on May 31 for the purpose of forestalling the action of the regular Republicans. The signers of this invitation did not constitute an impressive group. Representing only eleven states, they included no names more distinguished than those of B. Gratz Brown, Friedrich Kapp, Emil Preetorius, and James Redpath. However, their call was shortly reinforced by one emanating from a number of minor state officials in New York, and one sent out by a considerable number of Abolitionists.¹

Frémont's papers do not indicate that he was excited by the prospect for another nomination for the presidency, or that he had any illusions as to the chances for his election; indeed, it appears that he was by no means certain of consenting. His papers do show that he was urged to take a receptive position by such men as Governors Andrew and Curtin, and David Dudley Field. The coming convention was derided by William Lloyd Garrison. "General Frémont, as yet," he wrote, "has not shown a single state, a single county, a single town or hamlet in his support. Who represents him from Massachusetts, on the call for the Cleveland Convention? Two men, both non-voters, I believe, and neither

¹ *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1865, p. 783 ff.

of them has a particle of political influence.”¹ Wendell Phillips, on the other hand, was warmly for Frémont, and when the Convention actually met, it had a good press. Even the Democratic journals, for selfish reasons, spoke well of it.

It opened formally on May 31, 1864, in Cosmopolitan Hall in Cleveland, with ex-Governor William F. Johnston of Pennsylvania calling the motley body of about four hundred Radicals, Germans, and War Democrats to order. Many of the delegates had no credentials, though they represented various political organizations. Sixteen states had sent members. For the most part, everything went like clockwork. Frémont was nominated by acclamation, General John Cochrane of New York was named for Vice-President, though many had supposed that the honor would go to B. Gratz Brown, and a platform was adopted which expressed radical ideas from beginning to end. It called for uncompromising prosecution of the War, for the constitutional prohibition of slavery, for free speech and a free press, for a one-term presidency, for leaving reconstruction exclusively to Congress, and for the confiscation of rebel lands to be divided among soldiers and actual sailors. Frémont promptly accepted the honor, declaring that: “Today we have in this country the abuses of a military dictation without its unity of action and vigor of execution”; but he dissented from the plank upon the confiscation of rebel property.

¹ *The Liberator*, May 31, 1864.

For the moment, Frémont's nomination was regarded in Administration circles with comparative indifference. Lincoln, upon hearing of the proceedings, opened his Bible at the twenty-second chapter of I Samuel and read aloud: *And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.* As June began, in fact, everything seemed going well for the President. Sherman was pressing forward upon Atlanta; Grant was facing Lee on the Chickahominy, and the nation's trust in Grant was enormous. It had been made emphatically clear that the Republican rank and file wanted Lincoln. As Bryant put it: "In the first place, he is popular with the plain people, who believe him honest, with the rich people, who believe him safe, with the soldiers, who believe him their friend, and with religious people, who believe him to have been specially raised up for this crisis; and in the second place, because many of the thieving and corrupt scoundrels of the political mews, who know the fact of his popularity, have eagerly attached themselves to the car of his success."¹ Lincoln had the votes, and nobody else had. The Convention at Baltimore was a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm for the President. The delegates tried again and again to burst through the parliamentary forms and finally

¹ *N. Y. Evening Post*, June 3, 1864.

put him in nomination amid deafening salvos of cheers and heartfelt cries of "God bless him!"

But the week of Lincoln's triumph was a week of humiliation for the Blairs. They had made enemies on every hand, and these enemies were now gathering to crush them. The first blow fell upon the head of the much-hated Frank Blair. His diatribe against Chase had prompted Thaddeus Stevens to introduce in the House a resolution asking the President to explain just how Frank had been able to be a major-general and a member of Congress at the same time. The House responded by passing a resolution which declared that Blair had never possessed a legal right to his seat as Representative, and another asserting that any officer of the United States Army who had severed his connection with it by written resignation or by service in Congress must have a second appointment, in the manner required by the Constitution, before he could resume his sword.¹ This was a stinging rebuke, but worse was to come. For three years now, the discontent with, and dislike of, the Blairs in Missouri, their own special political barony, had been growing. Men there looked back upon Frank Blair's acts in 1861 and decided that he had been a marplot and a curse. In the spring of 1864, this opposition had come to a head, and the radicals, meeting in State Convention, had sent an implacably anti-Blair delegation to Baltimore. Another gathering sent a set of delegates friendly to Blair.

¹ *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st session, Part II, p. 1854 ff.; Part IV, p. 3389 ff.

Which delegation should be admitted? On June 8, this question came before the National Convention, and Preston King of the committee on credentials read a report excluding the Blairites. The Convention rocked with joy, and all proceedings were suspended while the tide of applause rose and ebbed. Then the report was put to a vote. State after state cast votes for its approval, until Maryland and Delaware were reached, and they voted "aye" too! Once more the Convention broke into thunderous applause, which still echoed around the hall when it was announced that the anti-Blair delegates had been seated by a vote of 440 to 4.¹ In effect, the Republican party served notice upon Lincoln that it had no use for the "Blair malcontents." This notice was underlined when, at the instance of the Missouri delegates, a resolution was passed declaring for the reorganization of the Cabinet—which meant that Montgomery Blair should go.

If in early June the skies had seemed bright for Lincoln, in July and August they grew overcast again. The losses at Cold Harbor and the Wilderness, when the people at last realized them, were stunning. Heavy fighting by Grant in front of Petersburg ended in a checkmate. The hospitals were choked with wounded, and the Army of the Potomac was exhausted. The spectacular raid of General Early at the beginning of July brought Washington within an inch of capture—so close that the Navy Department hastily prepared

¹ *N. Y. Tribune*, *N. Y. Evening Post*, June 9, 1864.

a vessel to carry the President down the Potomac. Greenbacks fell during the greater part of the summer to forty cents on the dollar. Gloom was general throughout the North, and it took the inevitable form of dissatisfaction with Lincoln. The elder Blair, in something like a panic, employed the closing days of July in visiting various leaders in New York City—Bryant, Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, and even McClellan, now about to be made the Democratic candidate—and pleading with them to support Lincoln, or at least to refrain from opposing him. Greeley wrote Lincoln, on August 9, that if the election were held the next day, the Democrats would sweep New York and Pennsylvania by 100,000 majority; while, near the middle of that month, Thurlow Weed, one of the most sagacious of practical politicians, told the President that his re-election was an impossibility.

This sudden and steady drop of the Republican barometer produced an equally sudden change in the Administration's attitude toward Frémont. It was seen that his candidacy might be disastrous. His followers were intensely in earnest, and a great part of the German press had rallied to his side. He would poll a large vote, and would poll it in states likely to be close. The ticket was considered strong, for Cochrane was a War Democrat of radical views—a former congressman, a brigadier-general till his health failed, and an early advocate of the policy of calling the emancipated slaves to arms. It was recalled by political wiseacres that a

third party in 1844, the Abolitionists under Birney, had beaten Clay for the Presidency, and that another third party in 1848, the Free Soilers under Van Buren, had beaten Cass.¹ Some Bostonians of prominence were so alarmed by the outlook that they published a letter proposing that both Frémont and Lincoln withdraw in favor of a compromise candidate, and to this Frémont returned a somewhat inconclusive but generally favorable reply.

With affairs in this condition, it soon came to Frémont's ears that some of the practical politicians were holding consultations with Lincoln upon the best means of strengthening his presidential prospects. He learned that the participants in these conferences included Elihu Washburne, Senator Harlan of Iowa, James M. Edmunds, who was a leading officer of the Union League, and above all, Zachariah Chandler. Chandler was the leading spirit, and he was insisting that the President make terms with Frémont. In a letter written long after, he said that he then deemed Frémont's withdrawal of vital importance, and obtained the consent of Lincoln and the chairmen of both the National and the Congressional Committees for his negotiations.² When all was ready, he visited Frémont in New York.

Their interview took place in the office of Frémont's attorney and political adviser, David Dudley Field.³ Field prepared the way by telling Frémont that while

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, June 2, 1864.

² *Frémont MSS.*, dated May 29, 1878.

³ *MS. Memoirs.*

the War had plainly not been conducted in the best manner, the assurances of a change in Administration policy were so clear that he thought it advisable for the General to do what he could for party unity. Chandler then made his appeal. Lincoln would not withdraw, he said, and yet he would certainly be defeated by McClellan if Frémont remained in the field. He was empowered to say, he went on, that if Frémont would step out, he would immediately be given active service with a high command, while those who had long persecuted him—the Blairs—would be placed where they could do him no future harm. Frémont, after a week of consideration, declined these rewards. Offered “patronage to my friends and disfavor to my enemies,” he states,¹ “I refused both. My only consideration was the welfare of the Republican party.” He wished no further command so late in the War, and he felt that the worst his enemies could do had been done. However, he announced, as an act of pure patriotism he would withdraw.

But if Frémont was unwilling to demand the decapitation of Montgomery Blair, the other radicals were not. Now that Frank Blair had been humiliated, it was the turn of the Postmaster-General. He had lately added to the number of his bitter enemies. When Early made his raid north of Washington, the Confederates burned Montgomery Blair’s country house. A friend expressed his sympathy, and Montgomery burst

¹ *Frémont MSS.*

out with the bitter remark: "Nothing better could be expected while politicians and cowards have the conduct of military affairs." Halleck heard of this and wrote a letter about it to Stanton, which Stanton angrily laid before the President. As a consequence, of course, Stanton and Blair were not on speaking terms.¹ But Montgomery was disliked almost everywhere. He had been barred out from the Union League; Zachariah Chandler had no use for him. The men who had been conferring with Lincoln, feeling they had the will of the Republican Convention back of them, decided to do some bargaining upon their own account. The result was that, when Frémont published his withdrawal on September 22, 1864, the President followed it the next day with a request for the resignation of the Postmaster-General to take effect at once.

It was an unexpected stroke. Montgomery, joining his associates Bates and Welles as they emerged from a Cabinet meeting at the White House, took their breath away by coolly remarking: "I suppose you are both aware that my head is decapitated—that I am no longer a member of the Cabinet." As Welles gasped, Blair took Lincoln's letter from his pocket and read it. Couched in cordial terms, it reminded Blair that he had frequently stated that he was willing to leave the Cabinet when the President thought it best, and informed him that the time had arrived. Both Welles and Blair agreed that Frémont was not the moving cause. Welles

¹ Welles, *Diary*, II, 80 ff.



MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN POPE, 1862
(Engraved by J. C. Buttré)



MONTGOMERY BLAIR AS A CABINET MEMBER
(From the Meserve Collection)
TWO CRITICS OF FRÉMONT

muttered something about Chase; but, "O," said Blair, "there is no doubt Seward was accessory to this, instigated and stimulated by Weed."

It was high time, for the Blair family had become a heavy liability to the Administration. Men spoke of them as a "nest of Maryland serpents"; Henry Wilson wrote the President that Montgomery Blair would cost him tens of thousands of votes.¹ Frémont could take what pleasure he liked in the downfall of his most unrelenting enemies. Unfortunately, he retired with a strange appearance of ungraciousness. His withdrawal was not, he wrote, because he approved of Lincoln's policies, but because General McClellan had declared, in effect, for restoration of the Union with slavery, and the Democrats must hence at all costs be defeated. Between the two sides, no man of liberal convictions could hesitate; but he thought that the Chief Executive was simply the lesser of two evils. "I consider," he stated, "that his administration has been politically, militarily, and financially a failure, and that its necessary continuance is a cause of regret for the country."²

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IX, 339.

² *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1865; *MS. Memoirs*.

MARIPOSA AND A FINANCIAL DÉBÂCLE

THE virtual ending of Frémont's public career left him free to turn his attention to his private affairs, and opened what is in some respects the strangest chapter of his career. It is a chapter marked by dramatic incident and tragic climax. When the War began, Frémont was a multimillionaire; a dozen years later, he was so nearly penniless that but for a few loyal friends he and Mrs. Frémont would hardly have known where they could lay their heads or obtain their next meal.

On the morning of December 13, 1864, a large and curious crowd surged into the Manhattan courtroom in which Judge Mason was presiding over Part Third of the State Supreme Court. The famous trial of ex-Mayor George Opdyke against Thurlow Weed for an alleged libel was about to begin. Every newspaper had sent its reporters and was ready to print columns of matter. The ablest lawyers of the city were enlisted as counsel, William M. Evarts and former Judge Pierrepont appearing for Weed, and David Dudley Field and former Judge Emott for Opdyke. In later years, men looked back upon the trial as heralding the disclosures of graft in national and city affairs which have made the Reconstruction period seem so shameful

in our history. The charges were that Opdyke had defrauded the city in claims growing from the destruction of a gun factory in the draft riots; that he had made illicit profits in war contracts; and that he had defrauded John C. Frémont.¹

From the intricate and confused testimony which occupied the next fortnight, it is possible to piece together a story which would have made a fit theme for one of Balzac's novels of business life. Evarts struck the dominant note of the tale when he said, in summing up: "The one phrase on everybody's lips is 'poor Frémont.' " It is a story of the Mariposa estate, 44,386 acres, from which many millions had been taken in placer gold and \$3,000,000 in quartz gold, and which was valued on a production basis at \$10,000,000; of Frémont as the owner of this estate, unworldly, a rash enthusiast, and uninformed upon the sharp practices of a shady business age; of his trust in Opdyke, who was known as a slippery speculator, and a man eager to make money and gain political preferment; of his trust in David Dudley Field, an astute lawyer later identified with some of the most outrageous operations of Jim Fisk and Jay Gould, and the counsel of Tweed; of his trust in a gentleman well named Ketchum—Morris Ketchum—and others of similar stripe. He was among friends, said Evarts sarcastically; "and he may thank God that he did not fall among thieves" (laughter). It is a story of the Mariposa estate involved, while

¹ *N. Y. Herald, World*, Dec. 14, 15, 1864.

Frémont was busy in Missouri and West Virginia, in heavy debts for litigation and the expenses of development—debts that bore 2 or even $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest a month, in some instances compounding; of the manipulation of the estate by Opdyke, Field, Ketchum, and others, always to their own benefit; of a fee of \$200,000 charged by Field; and of attempts, legal but barefaced, to deprive the owner of his just rights and revenues.¹

Frémont himself took the stand, his hair grizzled, his face, according to the reporters, showing a touch of genius and poetry, his eyes still lit by a deep smoldering blaze.² He had a natural reluctance to accuse old associates, and to expose himself as a victimized man. When, on cross-examination, he was asked whether a harsh advantage had been taken of him by his "friends," he stammered slowly: "I—I—I think not." Then, when Field himself asked him if the gentlemen named did not fairly and honorably execute their agreements, the General answered: "You will remember, Mr. Field, there were controversies which were adjusted that grew out of our different interpretations of the agreements." The indignation of the spectators was especially aroused by the testimony regarding one transaction. It was shown that Frémont had been induced to transfer \$2,500,000 of his stock in the Mariposa estate to Ketchum as proxies so that Ketchum, acting as his deputy on the Pacific Coast, could control it. But when Frémont

¹ Cf. *N. Y. Herald*, *N. Y. Tribune*, Dec. 14, 1864—Jan. 12, 1865.

² *N. Y. World*, Dec. 21, 1864.

wished to recover some of his proxies, he was told that he had signed a document which amounted to a deed of trust, and he had to commence a suit to get his shares back. On the settlement of the suit, his opponents offered to give him \$2,000,000 of the stock if he would sell them the remaining \$500,000 at twenty-five cents on the dollar, though it was then rated at fifty cents on the market. "His hand was in the lion's mouth," as Judge Pierrepont put it, "and he got out the best he could. He made this sacrifice of \$125,000."

Family papers show that Frémont had gone to Europe in 1861, with his lawyer, Frederick Billings, in the hope of selling a half interest in the estate, or at least procuring a favorable loan to pay its debts; and that he had talked with the Rothschilds and the Paris bankers without avail.¹ They show that the debts at the beginning of 1862 or thereabouts had reached the appalling total of \$1,250,000, and that interest charges were about \$13,000 monthly. Tormented by anxiety, the General was eager to shift the growing burden from his shoulders. During 1862, the estate became a subject of a stock incorporation, Frémont holding six-eighths of the shares, Billings one-eighth, and A. A. Selover of California the remaining eighth. Then commenced the complicated New York negotiations. As a result of them, in June of 1863, a new company was formed, the debts were paid off, and Frémont was left with three-eighths of the shares. He had, however, to

¹ Trial testimony; *MS. Memoirs*.

meet the legal expenses connected with the whole wretched business, which amounted, so his manuscript memoirs state, to the staggering sum of \$600,000.

Writing long after the event, Mrs. Frémont asserted that if her husband had not carried through this desperate and costly transaction when he did, "those interested in accumulating the indebtedness on the property, and so depriving him of the estate, would have succeeded." As it was, she added, in every way feasible by litigation they tried to hamper the actions of the company and, if possible, obtain control of some parts of its property.¹ She and her husband believed that the sweeping away of the costly dam which he had built across the Merced River was attributable to the treachery of an agent who deliberately neglected to open the sluice gates in flood time. There is no doubt that he did well to get out of the mess when he could, and with what money he could. He had not the cold, calculating business sagacity which was needed to rescue Mariposa from the ravenous sharks circling about it. Judge Pierrepont told the jury (which incidentally refused to convict Thurlow Weed of libeling Opdyke) that "this genius of a man once worth \$10,000,000 and more" would testify that it had almost all "been stripped away from him, and he has but little left."² This was not quite true. When he sold his shares, he was still a rich man. But he had only a fragment of his once-great fortune.

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² *N. Y. World*, Dec. 15, 1864.

It would have been well if, recognizing that the ruthless hurly-burly of business in the seventies was no place for him, Frémont had invested his money in safe securities and devoted himself to some professional pursuit. But such a course was alien to his temperament. He was too ardent and visionary. Always some great boon, wealth or fame or power, floated just before his outstretched hands. The great spaces of the West still aroused a fever in his blood. His dream of leadership in opening the gates to their vast resources was still with him, and it took an inevitable form. As the war closed, construction gangs began racing westward across the plains, and eastward across the Sierras, to join the two sections of the first transcontinental railroad, the Union Pacific. Plans were already on foot for the Northern Pacific, with which Jay Cooke was soon enlisted. Frémont had devoted two expeditions to exploring the possibilities for a south-central or southerly route, and it was natural for him to turn eagerly to the project which later grew into the Southern Pacific Railroad.

With characteristic impetuosity, he hastened to throw, not a quarter, not a half, but all, of his money into the enterprise. His first step was to purchase the franchise and property of the Kansas Pacific.¹ Within a short time, he held also an interest in the Memphis and Little Rock, and was busy helping urge the Texas Legislature to grant additional lands to the Memphis

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

and El Paso Railroad. Before him rose the alluring vision of a great consolidated line from Norfolk in Virginia to San Diego in California, and he purchased 9,000 acres of land in or near the latter city. For this contemplated line, he acquired franchises from the legislatures of California, Arizona, and Arkansas. But it is with the Memphis and El Paso alone, of which he shortly became president, that his name is most prominently connected. This railroad had been chartered in 1856 by the state of Texas, and had been generously endowed by the Legislature, receiving in all no less than 18,200,000 acres.¹ In the spring of 1867 and the closing days of 1868, the railway made two bond issues, on the strength of these lands, aggregating \$10,000,000. Frémont was one of the men chiefly responsible for offering these bonds. He believed that a mighty transcontinental system, almost 500 miles shorter than the Union Pacific, would soon come into being; and while fifty miles of Texas track were being graded and the first locomotives ordered, he placed surveyors at work in the mountain passes and took steps to plot a route from San Diego to Yuma.

It was a dream too glittering to be realized, but its quick and total collapse took even practical men by surprise. The methods of financing the scheme were characteristic of those flush and speculative days which followed the war and ended in the panic of 1873. Compared with the methods which Jay Cooke and his asso-

¹ *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, Aug. 9, 1873.

ciates used in pushing the Northern Pacific, or as it was derisively called, the "banana belt" route, they were fairly conservative; compared with the operations of the Crédit Mobilier in building the Union Pacific, they were decidedly decent. They were no worse and no better than the financial arrangements made for literally scores of lines which went bankrupt in the great crash. It is true that only six miles of track were actually laid down, and that only three locomotives were placed upon them,¹ but the land grants were, as the press agents wrote, "an empire in themselves." A total of \$5,343,700 worth of bonds was sold in Europe, almost entirely to French investors;² the agents in Paris paying three-fifths of the proceeds to the railway, and taking two-fifths for their trouble.³

The money came in slowly and irregularly, much of it being held in France to buy rolling stock and rails, while the obligations mounted steadily and heavily. Unexpected physical obstacles were met: a freshet blocked the channel of the Red River, and boats laden with materials could not come within fifty miles of the point where they were needed.⁴ The cost of grading the first seventy miles far exceeded the calculations. In mid-summer of 1870, the blow fell. The company became insolvent, the mortgage holders applied for a receivership, and the Federal courts directed John A. C. Gray to take possession of the property.

¹ *Report*, President T. A. Scott, Texas and Pacific Railway, May 31, 1875.

² *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1875.

³ *MS. Memoirs*.

⁴ Cf. E. P. Oberholtzer, *United States*, II, 520.

To Frémont this meant financial ruin—ruin utter and irretrievable. His connection with the Kansas Pacific had already shaken his credit; for after paying \$200,000 for this road, and investing large sums in beginning construction, he had quickly lost control of it.¹ Now everything was gone. Family tradition speaks of the blow as paralyzing in its completeness.

Throughout these years of financial adventure and misadventure, the General's household had been living in a fashion that was lavish to the point of ostentation. He was a millionaire and he dwelt on a millionaire's scale. During the War, he had owned a commodious brownstone mansion at what is now 21 West Nineteenth Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. This was in a fashionable part of town; it was not far from the Roosevelt home, the father of Edgar Saltus lived hard by, and at the rear it abutted upon the house which Senator John Sherman occupied for a time. Early in the sixties, Frémont also bought a luxurious summer home on the Hudson, the "old Webb place," some two miles north of Tarrytown, later a part of John D. Rockefeller's estate. Here were more than a hundred acres of lawn and woodland, a beautiful view of the Tappan Zee, and a fine house of rough gray stone. At both houses, there was every comfort; a remarkable cuisine, presided over by a French cook, a small corps of well-drilled servants, flowers, music, and books. Frémont kept a spirited mount and rode much in Central

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

Park with Colonel Zagonyi and others, while his daughter Lilly drove a pair of Kentucky thoroughbreds. The children had tutors, and Lilly in especial became an excellent linguist. Mrs. Frémont was interested in many charities and gave to them with a generous hand.

At all times, Frémont's personal tastes were simple, and in some ways he maintained a Spartan existence even when his wealth seemed greatest. He ate astonishingly little, he never touched spirits, and he drank wine—a glass of claret or Matrai—only when he was tired, and he did not smoke, saying that he had taken warning from his men on his expeditions, who seemed to suffer as much from the deprivation of tobacco as of food. He dressed plainly. He used to say that he preferred “old garments, old books, old friends.” His library was large, filling from floor to ceiling, in these years, four sides of a room twenty by thirty feet; in fact, after Humboldt's death, in 1859, he had purchased the books of the great geographer. In his own room was a special set of cases covering the art of war from the earliest times to his own day. But books and horses were his chief indulgences. He belonged to no clubs, costly or otherwise; he cared little for the theatre and nothing for elaborate social entertainments; and he liked to go to bed at ten or earlier, rising at the glimmer of dawn. The household was highly hospitable, for nothing pleased Frémont more than having people enjoy his home. At the estate on the Hudson—“Pocaho,” Mrs. Frémont named it—there were always guests, and

in town an extra plate was always laid at dinner for the chance comer. But balls, receptions, and glittering festivals were avoided. The General liked better a good fencing match, a long country walk, or a quiet talk with some trusted friend, like N. P. Banks, Thurlow Weed, or John Sherman.

Much time and money were spent in these years in travel. In 1869, the Frémonts visited France, Germany, Austria, and Scandinavia, the General combining pleasure with a certain amount of business; and they left two of the children in Dresden for schooling. As a railway president, he was in Washington, in Texas, in California—everywhere that his company affairs called him. Both Frémont and Jessie were personages, and they moved with dignity. In the summer of 1868, they visited St. Louis for what seemed a great event, the unveiling of a statue to Thomas Hart Benton. In Mrs. Frémont, it awakened the deepest emotion. A holiday crowd of 40,000 filled the park, and thousands of school children carrying roses were marshaled about the pedestal. A band played in the hot afternoon sun. As Jessie pulled the cord, the white cloth fell away, the children threw their flowers at the base of the statue, an outgoing train to San Francisco halted and saluted with whistle and waving flags, and she gazed through a mist of tears at the bronze image of her father, pointing westward, with the words carved below: "There Is The East. There Lies The Road To India."¹ To both Fré-

¹ Jessie Benton Frémont, *Souvenirs*, 169.



MRS. FRÉMONT AFTER THE CIVIL WAR
(The portrait by Fagnani.)

mont and Jessie, movement, action, and the sense of important pursuits were the breath of life; and Jessie in especial delighted to live with a certain largeness and splendor.

Now the spacious and luxurious days were suddenly gone forever. There was no money for travel, for tutors, or for servants. The Nineteenth Street home and the much dearer Pocaho on the Hudson were both swept away. Even prized personal belongings had to be sold. Bierstadt's painting of the Golden Gate with the sun setting behind it was bought by a friend for \$4,000, just what Frémont had paid for it. The library, the portraits, and the mementoes of California, Washington, and Paris in large part disappeared. Land which had been held in California in the name of Mrs. Frémont and the children was sold with the rest. There was a brief period when the two could not even live together, Mrs. Frémont going into the country to take refuge in one friendly household, and Frémont staying at another in the city. It was a chilling plunge from wealth to penury.

It could not be said that Frémont had fared better than other investors in the Memphis and El Paso, for he was the last man in the world to use his inside knowledge to escape scot-free from the crash which ruined others. Yet about his name there instantly collected the atmosphere of a scandal. The reason for this lay in the means used to sell the Memphis and El Paso bonds in France. Frémont, with his usual poor judg-

ment of men, had been unfortunate in his agent. The French consul-general in New York, a brother-in-law of Frémont, named Gauldree Boilleau, had introduced to him a M. Henri Probst, whom he indorsed as a well-known business man in Paris. Probst had in fact been connected with the French Government in supplying the troops engaged in the Mexican Occupation; Frémont liked the man, and at his instance the executive board appointed him agent in France.¹ It was agreed that for the first series of bonds issued 60 per cent of the face value was to be paid to the Company, 34 per cent was to be given to the banking house selling the bonds, and 6 per cent was to go to the agent. Probst, after associating with himself a prominent French railway engineer, Antoine Lissignol, to lend an appearance of technical strength to the enterprise, arranged with the great brokerage house of Paradis et Cie. to float the bonds. This house made harsh stipulations, requiring that all engines and rails be purchased in France or Belgium; and one reason why the road shortly failed was that 14,000,000 francs were put into its contracts for materials.²

Going from New York to Paris late in 1867, Probst had concluded this arrangement with Paradis et Cie. during the latter part of 1868; and it was shortly followed by a series of remarkable misrepresentations concerning the Railroad. A full-page advertisement in

¹ *MS. Memoirs.*

² Cf. Frémont's letter, March 25, 1870, to the Senate Committee on the Pacific Railway.

La Liberté of May 15, 1869, is typical of the extravagant claims made for the enterprise. This describes the company as the "Transcontinental Memphis Pacific," and pictures its line as running from Baltimore, Norfolk, and Charleston, the three Eastern termini, westward through Chattanooga, Memphis, Arkansas, Texas, and the Territories to San Diego. The roads from the Eastern seaports to Memphis were spoken of as "that part of the transcontinental railroad which is finished and in operation," while it was stated that the section from Memphis to Little Rock was in working order and the line from Little Rock to the Red River was being "pressed forward actively." Part of the advertisement reads like some wild romance. "Entering the territory of New Mexico," it declared, "the Transcontinental meets the great commercial route from Guaymas and the interior of Mexico at Santa Fé. It will, for the future, suppress the dangerous marches of caravans from Santa Fé to San Francisco, New Orleans, and St. Louis. It then reaches California, after receiving at Arizona City the traffic of the great River Colorado."

This was bad enough; but there were still worse misrepresentations. In *La Liberté* and other newspapers, it was stated that "the company with the approbation of Congress has fused itself with the lines constructed and at present working from Memphis to Chattanooga, Chattanooga to Washington and Baltimore, Chattanooga to Norfolk, and Washington to Norfolk through

Richmond." It was also declared that the Federal Government had subsidized the Memphis and El Paso as it had the Union Pacific. "Besides the grants of land," ran the advertisements, though there were no congressional grants, "the Federal Government has voted a guarantee of interest of six per cent in favor of the ordinary construction bonds." Of course this was preposterous. The American minister, Elihu Washburne, promptly sent copies of the advertisements and the placards which were stuck up over Paris to the secretary of state, suggesting that he investigate and take remedial action.¹ By this time, fifteen million francs' worth of the bonds had been sold.

Of these falsehoods circulated in Paris, Frémont knew nothing till later. "At the time the misstatement was made," he writes, "I was in Washington asking Congress for the right of way for this road through the Territories to the Pacific. This fact was widely known—spoken of in the newspapers in editorials and otherwise; and a telegram from Paradis et Cie. to any banker in New York would have corrected an error which the face of the bonds should have suggested."² The bonds declared explicitly that they were based upon lands granted by the State of Texas, and in no way indicated any connection with the Federal Government. No doubt some of the material for the glowing account of the "Transcontinental" as a system running from

¹ Washburne to Hamilton Fish, State Department Archives, June 4, 1869.

² *Frémont MSS.*

Norfolk and Baltimore to California was drawn from the hopes and imaginings of Frémont and his associates; he believed in his line, just as Jay Cooke believed fervently in his Northern Pacific railway running out of Duluth, which Proctor Knott sarcastically called "the zenith city of the unsalted seas." But even the mildest of the representations of the French agents were made without Frémont's authority or assistance, on their own responsibility.

Reaching Paris in the summer of 1869, Frémont issued a correction or *exposé* in which he set the French public right on the main facts as to the bond issues. "It is completely false," he wrote, "that we have ever declared that our mortgage bonds enjoy a Federal guarantee of six per cent interest." He added that the Company was pressing Congress for the nationalization of this network of railroads, the result of which would be a new land subsidy in the states which had not disposed of their public domain, and the recognition of the route as a postal and military road.¹ That is, he was still buoyantly optimistic as to the prospects of the now hard-pressed line, though its bankruptcy was less than a twelvemonth distant.

This bankruptcy caused an indignant outcry in France, and a feeling of dismay among right-thinking Americans. Not a few agreed with Senator Jacob M. Howard of Michigan that: "A more stupendous fraud never was committed or attempted upon a friendly peo-

¹ *La Phare de la Loire*, Sept. 18, 1869.

ple. It is one which, if the work of Americans, should make every American blush and hang his head." For some time, a wordy quarrel raged about the question of Frémont's implication in the scandal. An investigation of the subject was made by a Senate subcommittee, and an elaborate report was published.¹

Senator Howard, who wrote this document, came to the conclusion that while he could not say that Frémont was "personally responsible" for the false representations, he did not "think Gen. Frémont's skirts are clear in reference to these transactions." In a Senate debate, this statement was vigorously challenged by half a dozen champions of the General. Charles Sumner declared that it was highly unjust, and that there was no evidence of privity on the part of Frémont.² Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, James Nye of Nevada, and Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania all came to Frémont's defense. Trumbull had no difficulty in showing that Howard's report represented only his individual judgment, that it was based upon one-sided French and American newspaper reports, and that a majority of the subcommittee had actually disagreed with it. Frémont himself presented clear evidence to show his integrity. He was justly emphatic in declaring that he was shocked when he learned in Paris of the lies circulated by Probst and could not understand how they passed uncontradicted.

It is certain that Frémont acted with entire honesty

¹ *Senate Miscellaneous Documents*, 41st Congress, 2nd session, No. 121.

² For the full discussion, see *Congressional Globe*, June 19-23, 1870.

in the matter; but it is also certain that he showed a lamentable lack of discretion and care. It was his business, in the conscientious discharge of his duties, to keep an eye upon the advertisements of his Company's bonds placed in the French press, and he should have left nothing to chance. When he learned of the false statements, he should have been more indignant than he was in contradicting them, and he should have included a warning that there had recently arisen some question as the land grant given by the State of Texas to the Memphis and El Paso. It is impossible to think of a man of his high honor consenting to an improper act. But once more his precipitancy and lack of circumspection betrayed him, and once more he paid a heavy penalty for his rashness.irate Frenchmen came to America and filed affidavits in New York demanding his arrest. The Paris office of the Memphis and El Paso was closed by the authorities, and all the books and papers were seized. Criminal proceedings were commenced there against the men supposed to be responsible for floating the bonds, including Frémont. After a thorough examination by the authorities, lasting more than two years, Frémont's name was removed from the list of those accused; but subsequently, just before the trial commenced, it was suddenly restored. Later, he was told that this was at the instance of our minister, Elihu Washburne, with whom he had clashed during the Civil War. He was given inadequate time to appear before the *juge d'instruction*—only ten days after the

summons was served in New York; he had scanty funds for travel or for hiring counsel, and in his absence he was condemned in default for failing to reply. Though his French counsel, M. Allou, was in the courtroom, in accordance with French law the judge refused to hear him. The publicity given to this condemnation placed an ugly smirch upon Frémont's name, but one totally unjust.

Some years later, in closing his work as Federal receiver for the Memphis and El Paso, John A. C. Gray wrote the General on the subject. "I deem it fair to say," he stated, "that throughout the long and careful scrutiny which I have made into the affairs of the company, I have found no proof that would sustain the charges brought against you regarding the fraudulent sale of the company's bonds in France."¹ The Marquis de Chambrun, who represented the French bondholders in America, gave the same testimony. He also wrote for Frémont a letter explaining the condemnation in Paris. "The judgment pronounced against you," he said, "was nothing more than a judgment by default resting upon the *prima facie* case submitted to the tribunal of *police correctionale* by the judicial officer or officers who had directed the preliminary investigation. Under this state of affairs no defense could be offered in your behalf." He added that these *ex parte* proceedings were an absolute nullity in the eyes of Ameri-

¹ *MS. Memoirs*; letter of March 2, 1878. Gray's testimony is the more important in that he and Frémont were personally on bad terms. No one can go over Frémont's private papers and doubt that he was innocent of and incapable of the slightest connivance, however indirect, in the French misrepresentations.

can law, were in direct conflict with the safeguards of personal liberty in the American constitution, and "are now void in France."

As the wreck of the Memphis and El Paso was cleared up, and the Texas Pacific Railroad took over its debts and assets, Frémont could feel that his honor remained unblemished. He had the consciousness that his motives and aims had always been of the highest character. But this was almost all that he had. His career as a financier was as decisively ended as his career as an explorer. The demonstration that he was unfitted for business affairs was so complete that no acceptable employment was open to him. He was past sixty; he had three dependent children; he was almost penniless. The courage that he had needed in facing the snow-choked Sierras or the storm of wartime obloquy in St. Louis was no greater than the courage that he needed now.

CHAPTER XXXVI

POVERTY, LABOR, AND THE END

IN this family crisis, it was Mrs. Frémont who, with characteristic vigor, came to the rescue. "I am like a deeply built ship," she used to say; "I drive best under a stormy wind." She had already discovered that she could earn money with her pen. During the Civil War she had set herself, with a frenzy of energy, to write the history of Zagonyi's brave troopers who made the charge at Springfield; and within ten days, according to family tradition, had produced the spirited little book called *The Story of the Guard*, the profits of which she devoted to the Sanitary Commission. Now, while the family went to live first on Madison Avenue, far uptown at Seventy-second Street, and then scraped together its resources to rent a cottage on what was called "the Esplanade" on the water front of Staten Island, she became a breadwinner.

Spurred on by the illness of her younger son, who was threatened with tuberculosis, and who must—the physician said—be sent to a dry high climate, she approached Robert Bonner of the *New York Ledger*. He offered her \$100 each for a series of articles. Doubtless he thought it would be months before they were all completed, but she went home, sat down at her desk, and

for days labored almost incessantly, hardly pausing for food or rest. When they were all done, she took them to the *Ledger* office and demanded payment in a lump sum to meet her son's needs. At once she began contributing to other magazines. In the fifteen years between 1875 and 1890, she produced article after article, story after story. She contributed tales for children to the *Wide Awake*, popular essays to the *Ledger*, historical sketches to the *Century*. Some of this magazine work was made over into books: *A Year of American Travel*, dealing with California and Panama in the gold-rush days; *Far West Sketches*, concerned chiefly with Mariposa life; *The Will and the Way Stories* for juveniles; and most important of all, in 1887, the *Souvenirs of My Time*, an episodic review, brightly written, of her eventful life from the Bodisco wedding to the last tour of Europe.

Frémont was one of the incorporators of the Texas Pacific, which took over the wreck of the Memphis and El Paso, and till March, 1878, when the receivership was terminated, he was largely occupied in helping adjust the affairs of his dead railroad enterprise. For his labors, he received only a slender compensation. He hence had reason to be glad when, in 1878, upon the intercession of Zachariah Chandler and other old friends, he received from President Hayes the appointment as territorial governor of Arizona. The salary was but \$2,000 a year, yet that sum meant much to the General. So, too, did the opportunity to revisit the wild West,

and to see his surviving friends, including Alexander Godey, who traveled with him from San Francisco to Los Angeles.¹ Already there was a legendary halo about Frémont's head, and his journey along the trans-continental line was a modest ovation. In Chicago and Omaha, he was offered banquets; while in San Francisco the Pioneer Association of California gave him a reception; in many smaller towns, the stations were crowded with people eager to see him once more; and the friendly demonstrations continued through lower California to the end of the railroad at Yuma. Thence he had a "camping-out journey," as Mrs. Frémont called it, to Prescott, the territorial capital.

Frémont enjoyed such administrative opportunities as the post offered, and busied himself with recommendations regarding mining development, railway building, and irrigation by storage reservoirs. With his characteristic liking for large projects, he raised also the question of using the Colorado River to flood the depressed region above the head of the Gulf of California known later as the Salton Sink, where a great inland sea could easily be recreated. The climate and vegetation of Arizona, he believed, might be essentially affected for the better.² There was a congenial if narrow social life at Prescott, where a number of army officers were stationed. He delighted in the return to an outdoor life, and was capable of being in the saddle

¹ Elizabeth B. Frémont, *Recollections*, 136. He also met W. T. Sherman.

² *Report to the Secretary of the Interior*, 1879.

for twelve hours at a stretch. He thought nothing of riding eighty miles in two days. But poverty continued a sore burden even in the distant Southwest, where house rent was ninety dollars a month and provisions were atrociously high. It is an eloquent fact that although Mrs. Frémont and her daughter knew that the wonders of the Grand Canyon were at hand, it was a financial impossibility to visit them.¹

In 1883, hopeful of re-establishing himself in the business life of New York, Frémont resigned, and they traveled back east to their residence on Staten Island. One undertaking which floated elusively before him was a plan for enlisting the Barings and other English capitalists in the development, by irrigation, of the rich Imperial Valley in California. While in Arizona he had become interested, in association with Judge Charles Silent, in various mining enterprises, notably in the rich copper section now known as the Verde—enterprises which ultimately made Judge Silent rich. He was as eager and hopeful as ever. He believed that fortune always lay just ahead. But of actual monetary returns, there was pitifully little.

These trying years brought into relief some of the best qualities of Frémont and his wife. They did not conceal their straitened lot. Newspaper reporters who visited their cottage for a "story" exclaimed over their evident poverty.² Yet they made the most of their

¹ Elizabeth B. Frémont, *Recollections*, 158.

² Cf. Leander Richardson, *Boston Herald*, Aug. 14, 1884.

few paintings, their bric-à-brac, their books, and the many trophies of Frémont's work as an explorer and soldier—the three presentation swords he had received from the people of Charleston, the Germans of St. Louis, and Captain Cathcart; his foreign medals; the flag he had unfurled from the Wind River Peak, and the campaign banners of '56. Their pride permitted not the slightest recognition, by word or gesture, that they had fallen in fortune, or the slightest intimation of regret. In dignity of bearing, Mrs. Frémont was as much the *grande dame* as ever; her husband was the same grave, reserved, courteous gentleman, a little quieter as the years passed, but with the same piercing eye. Their devotion was, as always, beautiful to see. Observers who were much with them have said that they seemed never to need to discuss a question to reach the same conclusion; they intuitively knew each other's wishes and mental processes. They seemed to have some strange spiritual bond, such as that which Mrs. Frémont suggested when she described for the Psychical Research Society the telepathic message which she believed she had received, after long days of emotional prostration, of Frémont's safety at Parowan in 1854.¹

Both of them struggled valiantly to make the best of their position. The two sons were educated at the Naval Academy and the Military Academy. Constant but unavailing efforts were made to obtain from the Government some compensation for the house and land seized

¹ Described also in *Far West Sketches*, 29–41.



FRÉMONT IN 1890

(His last photograph; on the back of the original Mrs. Frémont wrote,
"Most precious to me.")

at Black Point, near San Francisco, in 1863, for the erection of a fort; compensation which should have been made without hesitation, and which would have rescued them from all their difficulties. Mrs. Frémont wrote with unrelenting pen. In 1885-86, her husband also turned to literary labors. The *Personal Memoirs* of General Grant were then being read with intense interest, and Frémont arranged with Belford, Clarke and Company of New York to bring out two volumes of his own reminiscences, to be sold by subscription. The first of them, a ponderous work with numerous illustrations, some good and some very bad, appeared in 1887 under the title of *Memoirs of My Life, A Retrospect of Fifty Years*, with a sketch of the life of Benton written by Jessie. Based largely upon the reports of the exploring expeditions, much of which was reprinted almost verbatim, the *Memoirs* came down only to 1847, though they filled some 600 large pages. All this detail proved wearisome to the general reader, while the price of the book, ranging from \$5.75 to \$12.50 according to binding, was excessive. As a result, it was a commercial failure, and the second volume was never published. Frémont occasionally spoke in public, and in 1884 he journeyed through Michigan campaigning for Blaine, but of course such labors were without reward. There were times when the wolf seemed to howl very near the door.

At last there came a sudden crisis. Frémont's health seemed to be breaking, and late in 1887 he was seized

with so severe an attack of bronchitis that his physician declared he must be taken at once to a warmer climate. There was no money. In desperation—doubtless also in humiliation—Mrs. Frémont went to her old friend, the eminent railway organizer and builder, Collis P. Huntington, who was all concern. "It must be California," he said; "you should have my private car, but it is already lent." That night Huntington came in person to bring tickets, letters to officials of different railways, and a generous sum for expenses. Frémont was reluctant and almost angry, but Mrs. Frémont insisted. A day later they were in a Pullman, running out of the stormy December weather into the bright sunshine of Kentucky. "It had been a trial to see the General's sad, unsmiling face," wrote Mrs. Frémont afterward, "but towards evening he beckoned me across to his section, and holding my hand said, 'You were right to come. I feel better already.' Whereupon I cried heartily. Instantly a young conductor was beside me with words of genuine compassion. 'O, it is not that,' I said, 'I am so happy, the General says he feels better.' 'We all know who you are,' the tender-hearted man said, 'but we respected General Frémont's wish for silence.'"

This was the beginning of the end, though Frémont's long rest in California in 1888 seemed to restore his health. He returned to New York in 1889 to look after what he still proudly called his business affairs, leaving Mrs. Frémont on the Pacific Coast and writing to her daily. He had high hopes that he would yet induce

Congress to make a proper payment for the Black Point property. Moreover, he had been deeply touched and gratified when his friends set on foot a movement to have him restored to the Army as a major-general, and placed on the retired list with pay, and he now gave them every assistance that was proper. He had outlived most of his enemies—the Blairs, Elihu Washburne, and others—and all the ill feeling of the past. Public sentiment supported the measure, and in April, 1890, Congress, “in view of the services to his country rendered by John C. Frémont, now of New York, as explorer, administrator, and soldier,” duly made the appointment. It secured to him, for the first time in more than fifteen years, an adequate income, \$6,000 annually, and enabled him to look forward to his last days in peace.

His relief and pleasure, his friends in New York have said, were childlike. He proposed to go back as quickly as possible to Los Angeles, and there make his permanent home. Early in July, 1890, he wrote Mrs. Frémont that he would set off the following week. He had become involved with Josiah Royce in a controversy over his rôle in the conquest of California, and wished to complete an article for the *Century Magazine*. But he had less strength than he or his sons, with whom he had spent much time in Washington, supposed.

The end came as a direct result of a kindly act. On a hot July Sunday, he made a pilgrimage to the grave of a little boy friend in Brooklyn. The English mother had obtained from him a promise that he would lay

flowers there in memory of the child's birthday, and he kept the promise. That night occurred a sudden fall in temperature, and his boarding-house bed had insufficient coverings. Frémont had been overheated and fatigued, and was seized with a violent chill. His physician and close friend, Dr. William J. Morton, was called, and immediately upon arriving telegraphed up the Hudson to Ossining for the only son in reach, John C. Frémont, Jr. When the latter arrived, it was evident that peritonitis had set in, and that in a man seventy-seven years old it could only terminate fatally. Within a few hours it was all over. "The end came painlessly," wrote the son to his sister Elizabeth, in words which recall Kent's exclamation over the dead Lear, "and without knowledge to him. It was blessedly quick and easy, and as I looked at him lying there so still and peaceful I questioned whether I was not heartless, for I could find no sorrow or pity for him at all, but a feeling of relief that his life was over. And how thankful I am that the last few months were made more peaceful and happier for him." The date was July 13. He added: "Of what the effect is going to be on mother, I don't dare think. And when I do think, I doubt whether the cruellest result would not be the kindest. They lived in each other so that I don't think there is any life for the one left."

It was a characteristic end for a life full of misfortune—almost alone in a cheerless Manhattan boarding house, with no friends near, and with Jessie three thou-



JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT'S HOME IN LOS ANGELES
(Presented her by the ladies of that city.)

sand miles away; his hope of their comfortable days together, all financial anxiety at last removed, never to be realized. Doubtless he knew, as his life ebbed away, that his wife would be plunged back again into utter poverty. When he was placed in his coffin—he had instructed that it be a plain pine box, and that he be buried in an ordinary black suit, not his uniform—his son took a miniature of Jessie as she had been in the days of her youth, and the telegram that was her last message to him, and folded them in one of his crossed hands. It was the end of the romance that had begun in Washington in the bright autumn days of 1840.

Mrs. Frémont was destined to outlive her husband by a dozen years, residing constantly with her daughter in Los Angeles. The death of the General, who had received only two months' pay since his restoration to the army lists, left her in sorely straitened circumstances; but her friends and admirers came at once to her aid. Within a few months, in the latter part of 1890, she was presented with a handsome cottage in the newer part of Los Angeles. At the same time, Congress, spurred on by exaggerated press stories that she was in actual destitution, passed a bill giving her the ordinary pension of \$2,000 allowed to widows of major-generals. Her future was thus secure. For many years, she was one of the prominent figures of Los Angeles, deferred to on all public occasions. When President McKinley and John Hay visited the city in 1901, one of their first acts was to drive to Mrs. Frémont's home to pay her

their respects. "My goodness, John," Mrs. Frémont said to the Secretary of State, whom she recalled as a slender stripling in the White House in Lincoln's time, "how you have grown!" She was then confined to her chair, and on December 27, 1902, she died.

They are buried together at Piermont on the Hudson, near the brink of a bluff looking out over the broad Tappan Zee to the old home, Pocaho, where they spent some of their happiest years together. Over their grave, the state of New York in 1906 erected a dignified monument, with bronze flag, sword, and a medallion head of the explorer against a granite stone, and on it are recorded his many achievements and titles. He would have chosen for himself a shorter, simpler inscription—perhaps the sentence in which Buchanan declared that to him above all others belonged the credit for the conquest of California. Some of his friends would have chosen the line of Whittier—"Frémont, who struck the first brave blow for liberty." But the most fitting epitaph, recalling his happiest achievements and his most remarkable services to the nation, is furnished by the words of Jessie Benton Frémont—"from the ashes of his campfires have sprung cities."



JESSIE B. FRÉMONT IN OLD AGE

(With paintings of John C. Frémont and herself in the background.)

CHAPTER XXXVII

FRÉMONT'S CHARACTER AND FAME

IN this varied and energetic career, so full both of achievement and frustration, there is much which appears psychologically puzzling. The fact that to many of Frémont's contemporaries his personality seemed alien and impenetrable explains why his aims and motives were frequently misjudged, and his acts aroused such violent antagonism. He made ardent friends who loved him (some of them) just this side of idolatry; he made enemies who found no condemnation too harsh. Many who attempted to measure him in a detached way formed, after long study, an impression that he was a genius *manqué*, a distinguished and valuable man who just fell short of being effectively great. Josiah Royce, not the friendliest of observers, wrote that the most transient personal intercourse with this romantic and fascinating figure left a sense of a peculiarly hidden and baffling character. "The charming and courtly manner, the deep and thoughtful eyes, the gracious and self-possessed manner, as of a consciously great man at rest, awaiting his chance to announce his deep purpose and to do his decisive deed—all these things perplexed one who had any occasion to observe, as some did, that the deep purpose seemed always to have remained in re-

serve, and that there had been some reason in his life why the decisive deed had never been done.”¹ Other men, like Schurz, felt strongly attracted to him at first sight, and yet retained, in a sense of some subtle deficiency combined with great capacities, an unwillingness to give him their complete confidence.

Yet Frémont's character and mind are essentially plain and clear, and both his talents and limitations are susceptible of as close analysis as those of most men of reserved temperament. He is sometimes written of as a showy and pretentious personality. Nothing could be farther from the truth. All his closest associates testify that the outstanding qualities of his character were sincerity and simplicity. For ostentation—despite certain appearances to the contrary when in 1861 he tried to impress his strength upon hostile St. Louisans—he not only had no taste, but a decided distaste. He dressed with the utmost plainness. He avoided public appearances, and would go far to avoid a reception or civic dinner. He disliked public speaking, and it required a strong attachment to a man or cause to induce him, as in his brief tour for Blaine, to appear before an audience. He was simple in all his private habits: he liked plain food, he gave a plain hospitality, and he found his chief amusements in horseback riding and walking. In Mrs. Frémont's tastes there was always a strong element of liking for the dramatic, but of this Frémont himself showed not a trace.

¹ Josiah Royce. "On Frémont," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 66, p. 548 ff.

Frémont's habits and impulses were essentially and completely kinetic. It was noted by his friends that, beneath his quietness and dignity, he was always restless, always moving, always concerned with action rather than thought. In his leisure at Pocaho he was incessantly busy outdoors. Though he had a large library, especially strong in military works and exploration, he was seldom observed sitting with a book in his hand. His friends remember him eagerly mastering one of the high-wheeled bicycles just coming into vogue, going on long botanical excursions, and overseeing the gardens and stables. He was extremely fond of dogs and horses. The years in which he furiously organized the mining activities at Mariposa, building flumes, stamp-mills, and roads, were as congenial to him as the years of outdoor exploration. Rather strangely, he had little aptitude for mechanical contrivance; as one of his family expresses it, he was "not a putterer." In his later days, when master of his hours, he was nearly always in bed by ten o'clock, and was up and outdoors with the dawn. Yet when he was induced to take his seat in the social circle indoors, his restlessness abruptly left him, and his dignified immobility, his perfect quiescence, with never an unnecessary gesture or motion, impressed all who saw him.

His social needs were fully met by a family life which was singularly attractive in its warmth and devotion, and in which he displayed the knightliest side of his character. It is significant that he not merely refrained

from joining any clubs, but that he took no part in the activities of such bodies as the Grand Army of the Republic, in which he might have been a prominent figure; he was honored by the Royal Geographical Society, but he was not a member of the American Geographical Society. His circle of friends was limited, for the simple reason that his love of home life and his native reserve kept him from making new acquaintances readily. Yet in his years of wealth he gladly acquiesced in Mrs. Frémont's enjoyment of acts of hospitality, and Pocahontas was frequently full of guests, American and foreign. With those he knew best his reserve gave way to animation and even fun. His son writes that there was—

A sharp division between the two sides of his character; the questing side, which was expressed in his explorations, and the human side, which was companionable, cheerful, and with a tendency to gaiety accounted for by his French forbears. He heartily enjoyed a joke or a bright story, so long as it was keen and clean. Though in no sense pharisaical, he instinctively avoided the unclean, both physical and moral; and with all this, he was intensely human and understanding. One trait, or it might be said fault, was an indifference to what the general public might think, so long as he was sure that his action was right. Appearances are sometimes more important than facts, and I am sure that it was this indifference which has left him

to a certain extent a misunderstood figure. Perhaps a sentence I remember may explain what I mean more clearly. One day when I was commenting upon the injustice of the government toward him in a certain case, he checked me by saying: "No! The United States and its government are all right. The fault lies in the fact that the conscience of the people is delegated to the members of Congress, and a delegated conscience never functions."

Frémont's primary and surpassing talent was as an explorer; and just as he was rarely fortunate in the circumstances which threw him as a youth so quickly and effectively into the field of exploration, so he was unfortunate that later circumstances cut him off from all achievement therein. He was not a "Pathfinder"; he was a Pathmarker. He travelled over trails which had for the most part been found long before by trappers, hunters, and traders, and through regions that were at least partially known to frontiersmen. His distinction lay in the scientific equipment he brought to the task of surveying, observing, and describing these trails and regions. For his period he was an excellent topographer, surveyor, and mathematician, and a good amateur geologist and botanist. For zoology, which was less important, he showed slighter aptitude. It would be hard to overemphasize the zeal and conscientiousness which he gave to the work of mapping his routes, collect-

ing specimens, noting geographical and topographical facts, and at midnight, often in the harshest weather, after a day of exhausting toil, taking his observations of the stars. He had a true scientist's reverence for his calling. Few distinctions pleased him so much as his medal from the Royal Geographical Society, and he spoke warmly of that body as his "alma mater;" while he took pride in naming one of his rivers after Alexander von Humboldt. "I am given by myself," he wrote, "the honor of being the first to place his great name on the map of this continent."

Two contrasting traits are evident in Frémont the wanderer and explorer. He brought to his labors an enthusiasm which had in it more than a touch of poetry. The grandeur of the West became a passion with him. When he speaks of valley flowers "in brilliant bloom," of some lake "set like a gem in the mountains," of a camp where "the rocks lit up with the glow of our fires made a night-picture of very wild beauty," of Mount Hood rising "like a rose-colored mass of snow," he is recording an emotion that touched his innermost being. After the hardest day's march, he could write of some strange landscape that "the interest of the scene soon dissipated fatigue." To many this poetical enthusiasm over the fresh beauties of the West will seem the most attractive element in Frémont's character. The other trait is represented by his skill as an organizer, his iron discipline, and his fierce contempt for cowardice or shirking. The poet gave way to the marti-

net when it came to mounting guard against Indians, protecting camp equipment, barring liquor, or demanding the intensest exertions in Nevada deserts or Sierra snows. Himself uncomplaining and indomitable, he could not forgive the quitter. There is an undertone of scathing contempt, in his letter to Mrs. Frémont after the calamitous expedition of 1848-49, describing how one man gave up. "Proue laid down in the trail and froze to death. In a sunshiny day, and having with him means to make a fire, he threw his blankets down in the trail and laid there till he froze to death."¹

To the end of his life Frémont retained his ardent enthusiasm for nature and for the subject of exploration. He read nothing with so much interest as accounts of travel in uncharted lands, the penetration of Africa, and polar expeditions. He never hunted or fished, and taught his children not to take animals' life except under necessity. "Out-of-doors was life to him," writes his son; "indoors, a place sheltered from the elements. Stormy weather appealed to him as well as fair. Trees were to him sacred, and he would not let them be cut down on our property, unless dead or dying; then he would do the cutting himself. Flowers especially appealed to him; being a botanist, he took a double interest in them. Travelling with him through the mountains of Arizona on horseback, when he was governor, I have noticed he would guide his horse so as to avoid crushing a flower or ant-hill; all life had a

¹ Bigelow, *Frémont*, 369.

significance for him. Once we were climbing in the mountains near Innsbruck, and I came across a snake. Boylike, I started to kill it, but he would not permit it. 'No, let it go! It has not harmed you and probably enjoys life,' he said, adding: 'Besides, any Indian knows that to kill a snake causelessly will bring rain and a wet camp.'"

The two salient faults in Frémont's composition were, as the foregoing chapters amply illustrate, his impulsiveness and his weakness of practical judgment in dealing with men and critical situations. The two faults are closely allied. A greater endowment of caution, or if you will, practical sagacity, would have saved him expulsion from college; it would have withheld him from the descent of the dangerous Platte canyon in a frail boat with his instruments and records; and it would have prevented the unnecessary clash with Castro on his first entrance into California. His midwinter crossing of the Sierras was an act of impetuosity, in which he brilliantly succeeded because of favorable weather and the aid of two of the best frontiersmen of the time, Carson and Fitzpatrick. His attempted midwinter crossing of the San Juan and other mountains in 1848-49 was another impetuous act which ended in irretrievable disaster. If Carson had been with him here when the storms smote him with irresistible force, he would have urged Frémont to make camp, gather wood, put up shelters for the men and animals, weather the storm, and at its termination go back instead of forward. A



FRÉMONT'S GRAVE AT PIERMONT, NEW YORK

(The monument erected by the State of New York, after the failure of plans to provide a suitable monument and burial place in California. Photograph by courtesy of F. S. Dellenbaugh.)

different decision on Frémont's part would have saved human lives. But his most lamentable display of imperfect judgment was in St. Louis in 1861. He surrounded himself with poorly-selected men; he treated tactlessly men and forces requiring careful conciliation; he disregarded the wise and kindly efforts of Lincoln to counsel him, and by issuing his emancipation proclamation without consulting his superiors he placed himself at one rash leap in a fatal position. It is but a partial excuse to say that his judgment, with all its defects, was in many respects better than the judgment shown in Washington.

It was this impetuosity, this erratic judgment, which placed Frémont repeatedly in the position of a man who held brilliant opportunities which he failed quite to utilize as he should. His fourth expedition was an absolute failure, and his fifth expedition came near being so, though both might have been brilliant successes. The very gold mine which fortune prodigally placed in his hands faded almost inexplicably away. This ever-companioning defect enabled men to call him, both in the Civil War and in business afterward, a dreamer. It enabled the caustic Royce to speak, with some justice, of the wonderful caprice which attended his career, the repeated and unheard-of kindness of fortune which somehow led in the end to failure and abortion for many of his great enterprises. "It was as if a character of pure poetry," wrote Royce, "some Jaques or some lesser Round Table knight, had escaped

from romance-land, and were wandering about amongst live men on the earth. Always, as the Odyssean gods show their airy nature at the moment they vanish, this fictitious being would bear about him, in the real world, signs of his insubstantiality." Yet this view must not be pressed too far. He was a very vital, energetic, and in some ways practical leader. Much of the good fortune which seemed fortuitous was honestly earned, and many of his opportunities he used to the material and lasting benefit of the republic.

In the varied fields which he entered, as explorer, as scientist, as one who did most to advertise to the American people the resources of the new West, as soldier and administrator, he labored conscientiously and unselfishly, and he wrought accomplishments which have not received their full meed of honor. He wrote his name all over the great region between the Mississippi and the Pacific. He did more; he left a fame which must always touch the imagination of Americans. He and the remarkable woman who shared his career gave our history some pages which might seem the very stuff of legendary romance, and over which, in their sparkle and color, succeeding generations will delight to hang.

APPENDIX

1—THE FRÉMONT CHILDREN

IN Jessie Benton Frémont's Bible is preserved a list of the births and deaths of her children. It runs as follows: Elizabeth Benton Frémont, born Washington Nov. 13, 1842; Benton Frémont, born Washington July 24, 1848; John Charles Frémont, born April 19, 1851; Anne Beverly Frémont, born Paris, Feb. 1, 1853; Frank Preston Frémont, born Washington, May 17, 1854. Benton Frémont, died on the Missouri River, Oct. 6, 1848; Anne Beverley Frémont, died at Silver Springs, Md., near Washington, July 12, 1853. To this list is added, in Jessie Frémont's handwriting: "Care and sorrow and childbirth pain."

2—FRÉMONT'S OFFICIAL POSITIONS

Appointed second lieutenant U. S. Topographical Engineers, July 2, 1833; brevetted captain, "for gallant and highly meritorious services in two expeditions to the Rocky Mountains, the first of which terminated Oct. 17, 1842, the second beyond those mountains terminated July 31, 1844," on July 31, 1844; appointed lieutenant-colonel United States Mounted Rifles on May 27, 1846; served as major commanding the Cali-

ifornia Battalion of Volunteers and a provisional battalion which he himself organized from July 23 to Oct. 27, 1846; appointed military commandant of California on Sept. 2, 1846; appointed civil governor of California on Jan. 16, 1847, and formally relinquished the position on April 19, 1847; resigned from the Army on March 15, 1848. United States senator from California Sept. 10, 1850, to March 4, 1851. Appointed major-general in the United States Army, May 14, 1861; assumed command of the Western Military Department on July 26, 1861, and relinquished it Nov. 2, 1861. Took command of the Mountain Department on March 29, 1862, and was relieved June 27, 1862. Resigned from the Army on June 4, 1864. Served as Governor of the Territory of Arizona 1878-1882. By act of Congress was appointed major-general April 19, 1890, and retired April 28, 1890.

3—ALEXANDER GODEY'S STATEMENT

(Alexander Godey's statement, in the *New York Evening Post*, Oct. 30, 1856, from the *San Francisco Star of Empire*, in answer to attacks upon Frémont; dated Los Angeles, September 12, 1856).

And first, I deny flatly that any outrages or depredations were first committed by the American forces (or, as they are termed, "desperadoes") upon the inhabitants of Sonoma or the surrounding ranches, upon and subsequent to the taking of that place; the charge is false and infamous, and the epithets bestowed upon the gallant old mountaineers and settlers composing the force

under Frémont are a foul slander. They were, and the survivors now are, as honest, upright, and respectable as the best of their detractors. They never committed any depredations other than those strictly according to the rules of civilized warfare, and no honorable Californian ever had cause to complain of Frémont and his men. Possessing unbounded confidence in the bravery, prudence, and sagacity of their commander, his men were obedient and orderly under all circumstances, enabling him to maintain more thorough discipline while marching through an enemy's country than any other officer it has been my fortune to know. And his expeditions were eminently characterized by a regard for the rights and interests of the inhabitants of the country through which his forces marched, which secured to him the kindest feelings of regard and respect of the entire California population; and during the prosecution of the war, and up to the present time, I have yet to learn that any Californian—with the exception of Juan Padilla, whose name appears in the *Los Angeles Star* article—has ever complained of John C. Frémont. On the contrary, no man at that time made so favorable an impression; and the native Californians ever have and do now respect and admire his character. . .

I now come to the "killing" of the "Berregeses," by the "accomplices of Frémont," and to convey an adequate idea of all the circumstances attending this matter, I will advert to an affair which transpired a few days previous. While we were on the march for San Rafael,

the bodies of Tom Cowie and two companions of his were encountered on the road, having been murdered by a part of the enemy under Juan Padilla, the individual about whose cattle such an ado is made; their bodies presented a most shocking spectacle, bearing the marks of horrible mutilations, their throats cut, and their bowels ripped open; other indignities were perpetrated of a nature too disgusting and obscene to relate.

Tom was well known to many of our men, with whom he was a favorite, and the sight that his lifeless remains presented created in the breasts of many of his old friends a feeling of stern and bitter revenge; and if many a deep and solemn oath was taken to mete out stern vengeance upon the perpetrators of the foul deed, those conversant with men will not be surprised. (It has always been understood that Padilla with his own hands tore out the bowels of Tom Cowie and placed them to his lips, thanking God that he at last had tasted the blood of an American). San Rafael was surprised soon after and occupied by our troops. Subsequently, being myself officer of the day, it was reported to me that a boat was crossing the straits containing two persons. Kit Carson, who was on patrol duty with his party, intercepted the men when they landed, and upon their resistance shot them both; upon their persons were found letters to the commander of the enemy's force, who were still supposed to be at San Rafael. Had they submitted, and not attempted to escape, they would have received no harm, but they furnished a pretext

which, to the friends of Tom Cowie, was perhaps not unwelcome.

4—FRÉMONT'S PROCLAMATION

The full text of Frémont's proclamation, verified by his own hand, is as follows:

Headquarters Western Department,
St. Louis, August 30, 1861.

Circumstances, in my judgment, of sufficient urgency, render it necessary that the commanding general of this department should assume the administrative powers of the State. Its disorganized condition, the helplessness of the civil authority, the total insecurity of life, and the devastations of property by bands of murderers and marauders, who infest nearly every county of the State, and avail themselves of the public misfortunes and the vicinity of a hostile force to gratify private and neighborhood vengeance, and who find an enemy wherever they find plunder, finally demand the severest measures to repress the daily-increasing crimes and outrages which are driving off the inhabitants and ruining the State.

In this condition, the public safety and the success of our arms require unity of purpose, without let or hindrance to the prompt administration of affairs. In order, therefore, to suppress disorder, to maintain as far as now practicable the public

peace, and to give security and protection to the persons and property of loyal citizens, I do hereby extend, and declare established, martial law throughout the State of Missouri.

All persons who shall be taken with arms in their hands within these lines, shall be tried by court-martial, and if found guilty will be shot.

The property, real and personal, of all persons in the State of Missouri who shall take up arms against the United States, or who shall be directly proven to have taken an active part with their enemies in the field, is hereby confiscated to the public use, and their slaves, if any they have, are hereby declared freemen.

All persons who shall be proven to have destroyed, after the publication of this order, railroad tracks, bridges, or telegraphs, shall suffer the extreme penalty of the law.

All persons engaged in treasonable correspondence, in giving or procuring aid to the enemies of the United States, in fomenting tumults, in disturbing the public tranquillity by creating and circulating false reports or incendiary documents, are in their own interests warned that they are exposing themselves to sudden and severe punishment.

All persons who have been led away from their allegiance are required to return to their homes forthwith. Any such absence, without sufficient

cause, will be held to be presumptive evidence against them.

The object of this declaration is to place in the hands of the military authorities the power to give instantaneous effect to existing laws, and to supply such deficiencies as the conditions of war demand. But this is not intended to suspend the ordinary tribunals of the country, where the law will be administered by the civil officers in the usual manner, and with their customary authority, while the same can be peaceably exercised.

The commanding general will labor vigilantly for the public welfare, and in his efforts for their safety, hopes to obtain not only the acquiescence but the active support of the loyal people of the country.

J. C. Frémont,
Major-General, Commanding.

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Of the three books previously devoted to Frémont, two are campaign biographies. John Bigelow's *Life of John Charles Frémont* (1856) runs to nearly 500 rather dull pages, eulogistic throughout. The pictures are curiosities. But the volume is given some permanent value by the documents it incorporates; they include Commodore Stockton's report on his Pacific Coast operations, Frémont's defense before the court-martial, his letter from Taos in January, 1849, the Frémont-Wilkes correspondence, and his letter to the *National Intelligencer* on his expedition of 1854. Charles Went-

worth Upham's *Life, Explorations, and Public Services of John Charles Frémont* (1856) is a brief, clear, and undistinguished narrative, also eulogistic. As a critical and scientific account of Frémont's explorations, Frederick S. Dellenbaugh's *Frémont and '49* is invaluable. The author is thoroughly acquainted with most of the country which Frémont traversed. He identifies localities, furnishes information upon topography, climate, and Indians, corrects many of Frémont's minor observations, explains others, and presents a wealth of maps and pictures. The book is friendly to Frémont throughout. Nearly all of the 500 pages are devoted to the period before 1850. There is a valuable bibliography.

Frémont's own *Memoirs of My Life* (1886) is based directly upon his reports and from Chapters Four to Eleven, inclusive, adds little to them. The first three chapters contain a rapid account of his education and early adventures, and his work with Nicollet. The last four chapters deal, at times sketchily, yet with evident sincerity, with the events of 1845-46 in California, ending with the Capitulation of Couenga. There is also a "Chapter of Results." Of Frémont's Reports, I have listed about a dozen commercial editions issued by as many different publishers, in the United States, Ireland, England, and Germany. References in the text are to the edition of George H. Derby and Company, *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, and California* (1849), used because a copy furnished by the Frémont family contained a few corrections in Frémont's hand. This contains also the official report of Colonel Richard B. Mason on the gold regions.

Jessie Benton Frémont's published books, while highly readable, must be used with care. She wrote rapidly and with a constant eye to dramatic effect. *Souvenirs of My Time* (1887), *Far West Sketches* (1890), and *A Year of American Travel* (1877) are the most valuable. The *Recollections of Elizabeth Benton Frémont* (1912), compiled by E. T. Martin, have material of interest upon the years at Mariposa and at Prescott. S. N. Carvalho's *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West with Frémont's Last Expedition* (1857) sketches a graphic picture of the explorer. Micajah McGehee's "Rough Times in Rough Places," in the *Cen-*

Century Magazine, Vol. 19, New Series, 771 ff., offers a vivid history of the sufferings of the fourth expedition. Theodore Talbot's manuscript narrative of his observations with the second expedition, in the Library of Congress, is a fresh and naïve little record. John R. Howard's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1925) contains recollections of the Mariposa War and the Missouri and West Virginia campaigns by a man very close to Frémont, and his enthusiastic admirer. The author had several conversations and some correspondence with Mr. Howard.

Published material upon the California years includes Bayard Taylor's *Eldorado* (1850), with its warmly favorable view of the Pacific Coast; Philip St. George Cooke's *Conquest of New Mexico and California* (1878), hostile to Frémont; W. T. Sherman's *Memoirs* (2 v.; 1875); William Carey Jones's *First Phase of the Conquest of California* (1877), a shrewd and friendly paper; and W. F. Swasey, *The Early Days and Men of California* (1891), by a pioneer. John A. Sutter's *Diary* was published in the San Francisco *Argonaut*, Jan. 26-Feb. 16, 1878. It is regrettably brief and fragmentary, but invaluable. Two highly interesting books are Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California* (1848), by an officer in Frémont's California Battalion, and Lieutenant Joseph Warren Revere's *Tour of Duty in California* (1849). The best work upon Carson is Edwin L. Sabin's *Kit Carson Days* (1914), and it is supplemented by Stephen Bonsal's *Life of Edward Fitzgerald Beale* (1912). Frémont's own article upon "The Conquest of California" was published in the *Century Magazine* for April, 1890, and was answered by Josiah Royce in the *New York Evening Post* of June 20, 1890. Frémont was preparing a reply when stricken. The student should consult Mrs. Frémont's article on "The Origin of the Frémont Explorations" in the *Century Magazine*, Vol. 19, New Series, p. 768, and Josiah Royce's articles, "Montgomery and Frémont" and "Light on the Seizure of California" in the same volume. Professor Royce contributed a highly misleading article "On Frémont" to the *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 66, p. 556.

Of secondary works upon California, it is necessary to mention only the most prominent volumes. Irving Berdine Richman's *Cal-*

for *California Under Spain and Mexico, 1535-1847* (1911) is excellent; H. H. Bancroft's *History of California* (1886-88), especially Volume 5, a compilation full of inaccuracies, and in one or two places almost maliciously unfair to Frémont; Josiah Royce's *California from the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco* contains an effort to debunk the "Frémont Legend" and the Mexican War which results in grave injustice to Frémont, the California pioneers, and the Polk Administration; Theodore H. Hittell's *History of California* (2 v.; 1885) and John S. Hittell's *History of San Francisco* (1878) are thorough works, beginning to be a little out of date; while the newer knowledge and point of view are presented in Cardinal L. Goodwin's *The Trans-Mississippi West from 1803 to 1853* (1922).

Through the courtesy of Professor Herbert I. Priestley, the author was enabled to hire copyists and obtain much manuscript material in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California. The more important narratives by American settlers and others thus used are the *Narrative of John C. Frémont's Expedition in California 1845-46, and Subsequent Events in California down to 1853*, by Thomas S. Martin, one of Frémont's men (Cal. MSS. D. No. 122); the *Statement of William F. Swasey* (Cal. MSS. D. No. 200); the recollections of John Fowler, of Napa County, upon *The Bear Flag Revolt in California, 1846* (Cal. MSS. D. 83); and *California in 1846*, as related by William Hargrave, of Napa. The letters and reports of Thomas O. Larkin in the State Department in Washington are invaluable; the author supplemented them by obtaining copies of the Larkin Papers in the Bancroft Library as well. The long-lost papers of Edward Kern have been recently recovered, are in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and have been reprinted as the *Fort Sutter Papers* in an edition of fifteen copies edited by Seymour Dunbar. One of these copies is in the New York Public Library.

An interview with Oliver Wiggins, who accompanied Frémont on his early expeditions, appeared in the *Denver News* of Feb. 23, 1890; its tone is unfriendly, and it is highly inaccurate.

Upon the campaign of 1856, the Bigelow MSS. in the New York

Public Library and the Chase MSS. in the Library of Congress are illuminating. Among newspapers, the *New York Herald, Tribune*, and *Evening Post* are especially worth consulting. There is material of interest in T. W. Barnes, *Memoir of Thurlow Weed* (1884); John Bigelow, *Retrospections of an Active Life* (5 v.; 1913); G. W. Julian, *Political Recollections 1840-1852* (1884); and J. S. Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War* (1879). Western opinion is reflected in the files of the *Chicago Tribune*, and in Volume Three of the *Centennial History of Illinois, The Era of the Civil War, 1840-1870* (1919), by Arthur C. Cole. The late ex-Senator Albert J. Beveridge kindly permitted the author to read the manuscript of his chapter on this campaign in his forthcoming life of Lincoln. Reference should also be made to O. J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (1886); C. M. Clay, *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay* (1886); Lewis Clephane, *Birth of the Republican Party* (1889); and W. C. Clephane, "Lewis Clephane, A Pioneer Washington Republican," *Columbia Historical Society Records*, Vol. 21.

Of works on the Civil War period, it is of course possible to cite only a few of those used or consulted by the author. The foundation for all research is furnished by the government compilation, *The War of the Rebellion; The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (1880-1901). These 128 volumes are divided into four series, of which the first is the most valuable for Frémont's activities. The *Congressional Globe* for these same years is equally indispensable. The *American Annual Cyclopædia* begins with 1861 and has a huge and carefully compiled volume for each year. The history of the Civil War (for such it is) by John G. Nicolay and John Hay called *Abraham Lincoln, A History* (10 v.; 1890), treats every subject, great or small, in a light favorable to the President; there are two chapters on Missouri in the fourth volume. This work is supplemented by John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (12 v.; 1905). Horace Greeley's *The American Conflict* (2 v.; 1864) contains materials difficult to find elsewhere.

Unfortunately there has been no treatment of the Blair dynasty

worthy of the name, and the Blair papers were closed to the author, as they have been to other investigators for many years. There is, however, the promise of a thorough history of the family to appear shortly. D. G. Croly, *Seymour and Blair* (1868), is a campaign biography. Gist Blair, "Annals of Silver Springs," in the *Columbia Historical Society Records*, Vol. 21, is worth consulting. So also is W. R. Hollister and Harry Norman, *Five Famous Missourians* (1900). A list of the war-time speeches of Frank Blair and Montgomery Blair reprinted in pamphlet form would fill a page of close type; but all the utterances of the former in the *Congressional Globe* deserve attention. His famous philippic against Frémont was delivered in the House on March 7, 1862, and reprinted under the title of *Frémont's Hundred Days in Missouri*.

Upon the Missouri campaign, and Frémont's place in it, almost nothing is furnished by the ordinary histories of the Civil War, or by such works as those of Ropes and Livermore. T. L. Snead, *The Fight for Missouri from the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon* (1886), is the work of a fair-minded Confederate soldier and Congressman who knew how to handle his pen, but it comes down only to the battle of Wilson's Creek. It is supplemented by James Peckham, *Gen. Nathaniel Lyon and Missouri in 1861* (1866), a eulogy with some valuable letters. John McElroy's *The Struggle for Missouri* (1909) is a volume of much more solid worth. Material of value may be found in R. J. Rombauer, *The Union Cause in St. Louis in 1861* (1909), and the article by G. S. Grover on "The Civil War in Missouri" in the *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 8, p. 1 ff. Some information upon men and factions hostile to the Blairs is furnished by other articles in the *Missouri Historical Review*, including Charles Gibson's "Edward Bates" in Vol. 2, H. C. McDougal's "A Decade of Missouri Politics, 1860 to 1870," Vol. 3, and W. B. Stevens, "Lincoln and Missouri," Vol. 8. The files of the New York *Herald* and *Tribune* are indispensable, and those of the St. Louis newspapers highly valuable. Another indispensable source is Jessie Benton Frémont's *Story of the Guard* (1861), which contains many of Frémont's letters. A number of pamphlets should be noted, such as Van Buren Denslow's *Frémont*

and McClellan: *Their Political and Military Careers Reviewed* (1862), a defence of Frémont.

For Frémont's Missouri campaigning, a friendly treatment is furnished by John R. Howard in the *Remembrance of Things Past* already mentioned, and an impartial treatment in Gustav Koerner's *Memoirs of Gustav Koerner, 1809-1896*; (2 v.; 1909). J. M. Schofield's *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (1897) has some interesting pages, and there are comments of note in *Lew Wallace, An Autobiography* (2 v.; 1906). The fullest and best sources are the newspapers, the *Official Records*, and the *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War* (1863), in Three Parts. This last contains the testimony of Frémont, Frank Blair, and Montgomery Blair. The debate which raged in the House of Representatives early in March, 1862, upon Frémont, and especially the speeches of Representative Shanks, Representative Schuyler Colfax, and Representative J. S. Thomas, should be consulted. A highly partisan statement is furnished by William Brotherhead in *General Frémont and the Injustice Done Him by Politicians and Envious Military Men* (1862). Frémont's long *Statement and Evidence* presented to the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was reprinted in full, in a special extra sheet, by the *New York Tribune* of March 4, 1862, with an editorial warmly taking Frémont's side.

The best single source on the Republican radicals and the events leading up to Frémont's candidacy in 1864 is the Chase MSS. in the Library of Congress, supplemented by papers of Thaddeus Stevens and Ben Wade. The student should also use A. B. Hart, *Salmon Portland Chase* (1899); A. G. Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade* (1888); O. J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (1886); and H. G. Pearson, *The Life of John A. Andrew* (2 v.; 1904). There is much of value in W. P. and F. J. Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison* (4 v.; 1885-89); Lorenzo Sears, *Wendell Phillips, Orator and Agitator* (1909); A. K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century* (1902); and Moncure D. Conway, *Autobiography* (2 v.; 1904). There is no good biography of Zachariah Chandler, and his papers also are withheld. The *Diary of Gideon Welles* (3 v.; 1911) is, of course, invaluable. There are a few

items of interest in John Cochrane, *Memories of Incidents Connected with the Origin and Culmination of the Rebellion* (1879).

Upon the events of 1864 there is surprisingly little concerning Frémont in any published work. The two volumes relating to Henry Winter Davis, his *Speeches and Addresses* (1867) and B. C. Steiner's *Life of Henry Winter Davis* (1916), are virtually barren. In Edward Channing, *A History of the United States*, Vol. 6 (1925), there is an excellent chapter on the election, supplementing Rhodes. The student should also consult Nathaniel Wright Stephenson's *Lincoln* (enlarged edition; 1924), where Chapters 32 and 33 deal with the Blair-Chandler-Frémont negotiations. A useful book upon this subject, and upon many other aspects of Frémont's record during the Civil War, is Edward C. Kirkland's *The Peacemakers of 1864* (1927), which corrects Rhodes and Nicolay and Hay by taking a caustic view of some of the activities of the Blairs, and which is admirably conceived and written.

Frémont's activities in railway management are best followed in the files of the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, which is fairly well indeed, and in the daily press. For the affairs of the Memphis and El Paso, the student should see, in especial, the *New York Tribune* for Feb. 21, Feb. 24, and March 7, 1876, and Dec. 28, 1877; for the troubled history of the Mariposa estate after Frémont withdrew, there is material in the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* of Oct. 3, 1868, Aug. 3, 1872, and Dec. 19, 1874. The Senate debate of June 21, 1870, is illuminating upon Frémont's connection with the French advertising.

The manuscript materials generously supplied the author by members of the Frémont family fall into four groups: (1) a few letters of Thomas Hart Benton to his daughter; (2) a large mass of letters and autobiographical writings by Jessie Benton Frémont; (3) a considerable number of letters and memoranda by Frémont himself; and (4) the manuscript of some 150,000 words to which I have referred as *MS. Memoirs*. This was written in collaboration by Jessie Benton Frémont and her son Frank P. Frémont, the latter dealing with the military chapters, and Mrs. Frémont with the chapters on California, Europe, the election of 1856, business,

and home life. In part, these memoirs were composed with General Frémont's direct assistance and supervision, and among his papers are found a number of sheets dealing with errors into which his wife and son had fallen, and explaining moot points. These *MS. Memoirs* deal with the period from the Capitulation of Couenga in 1847 to Frémont's death in 1890. The author nowhere used them without such careful verification of even minute points as he could obtain, and all his main conclusions upon Frémont's career were formed independently of their aid. They did not, in fact, come into his possession until this biography was largely written. But at many points they are indispensable to an understanding of the man. The author has striven to make full use of the family papers, but they still contain untouched materials of great historical interest. He is pleased to think that his efforts contributed in some degree to induce the family, with great generosity, to deposit them in the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California.

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